

FROM CONTROVERSY TO COHESION: MANAGING RELIGIOUS TENSION IN MALAYSIA THROUGH SOCIORELIGIOUS HARMONY FRAMEWORKS

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Abstract

In 1938, Samuel P. Huntington notoriously argued that "the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural," a thesis that has since fuelled misconceptions about the inherent incompatibility of civilizations based on religious, ethnic, and racial differences. This perspective has particularly negatively impacted views of Islam when he added that "the crescent-shaped Islamic bloc, from the bulge of Africa to central Asia, has bloody borders." Using a qualitative, library-based research approach, this article explores the contemporary challenges of religious tensions in Malaysia. It investigates whether meaningful interreligious coexistence is viable in a multireligious country. These challenges, including prejudice and stereotyping, can be addressed through a comprehensive understanding of socioreligious harmony in Islamic perspectives that can be

formulated by engaging with the commonalities perspective of religion, the principle of human brotherhood, the value of mutual tolerance (*tasamuh*), the role of dialogue and peaceful coexistence (*fiqh al-ta'ayush*). Practical methods for implementing these values include interfaith education, community engagement, inclusive policymaking, and dialogue platforms that resonate with local cultural contexts. Together, these elements contribute to an integrated framework of harmonious socioreligious relations.

Keywords: Religious study; socioreligious harmony; multireligious societies; peaceful co-existence; Malaysia.

Khulasah

Pada tahun 1938, Samuel P. Huntington secara kontroversial berhujah bahawa "pembahagian besar dalam kalangan umat manusia dan sumber dominan konflik adalah bersifat budaya," satu tesis yang kemudiannya menyumbang kepada salah tanggapan tentang ketidakserasian semula jadi antara tamadun berdasarkan perbezaan agama, etnik dan ras. Perspektif ini khususnya memberi kesan negatif terhadap pandangan terhadap Islam apabila beliau menambah bahawa "blok Islam berbentuk bulan sabit, dari lengkungan Afrika hingga Asia Tengah, mempunyai sempadan yang berdarah." Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan kualitatif berasaskan kajian kepustakaan, artikel ini meneroka cabaran kontemporari ketegangan agama di Malaysia serta meneliti sama ada kewujudan bersama antara agama yang bermakna dapat direalisasikan dalam sebuah negara berbilang agama. Cabaran-cabaran ini, termasuk prasangka dan stereotaip, boleh ditangani melalui pemahaman menyeluruh terhadap keharmonian sosio-keagamaan dari perspektif Islam yang dapat dirumuskan dengan menggarap persamaan antara agama, prinsip persaudaraan kemanusiaan, nilai toleransi bersama (*tasamuh*), serta peranan dialog dan kehidupan bersama secara aman (*fiqh al-ta'ayush*).

Kaedah praktikal bagi melaksanakan nilai-nilai ini merangkumi pendidikan antara agama, penglibatan komuniti, penggubalan dasar yang inklusif, serta platform dialog yang selari dengan konteks budaya tempatan. Secara keseluruhannya, elemen-elemen ini menyumbang kepada pembentukan satu kerangka bersepadu bagi hubungan sosio-keagamaan yang harmoni.

Kata kunci: Kajian agama; keharmonian sosio-keagamaan; masyarakat berbilang agama; kewujudan bersama secara aman; Malaysia.

Introduction

In today's world, the pursuit of socioreligious harmony is of paramount importance. Across the globe, people experience unease while striving for peaceful coexistence in multireligious societies. Recent data underscore the persistence of this challenge, where the global Social Hostilities Index (SHI), which measures religion-related hostilities executed by non-governmental actors, including individuals, private groups, and social movements, provides a clear indication of ongoing tensions.¹

In 2022, the global median score on the Social Hostilities Index (SHI) remained at 1.6, unchanged from 2021. However, the number of countries experiencing high or very high levels of religion-related social hostilities rose slightly to 45 (23% of all countries studied), up from 43 the previous year. The majority of countries (153 out of 200), representing 77%, recorded low or moderate levels of such hostilities.²

¹ Pew Research Center, "Appendix B: Social Hostilities Index," *Pew Research Center*, accessed 1 December 2025, https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2024/12/PR_2024.12.18_restrictions-on-religion-2022_appendix-b.pdf

² Pew Research Center, "Appendix B: Social Hostilities Index,".

Even in a deeply plural society, religious diversity does not automatically produce harmony; social, institutional, and personal factors shape outcomes. In global and regional contexts, studies show that strong religious identity may correlate with intergroup distrust or exclusion when mismanaged. Yet, these same identities can foster trust and cooperation under inclusive frameworks. In the Malaysian context, for example, research by Mohd Farid Mohd Sharif and Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali reveals ambivalent student responses toward religious pluralism among youth in public universities, reflecting how educational background and socialization influence attitudes to religious diversity.³ This demonstrates that many individuals in multireligious societies experience unease and uncertainty as they navigate complex interfaith relations.

Nonetheless, empirical work from Sabah illustrates that peaceful coexistence is achievable when efforts combine religious ethics, community engagement, and interfaith dialogue. Suraya Sintang and Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali⁴ examine how the "spirit of human fraternity," inspired by shared values across religions, helps Muslim and Christian communities live in accommodative relationships, forging social solidarity despite religious differences. Meanwhile, their earlier study, focusing on a Bidayuh community, shows that interreligious harmony often arises naturally through everyday practices of mutual respect, shared

³ Mohd Farid Mohd Sharif & Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali, "Respons Pelajar Institut Pengajian Tinggi Awam Terhadap Pluraliti Agama di Malaysia," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 19(1) (2017), 28.

⁴ Suraya Sintang, et al, "The Spirit of Human Fraternity Pervades Sabah's Interreligious Landscape Preserving Unity in Diversity," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 24(1) (2022), 210.

festivities, and long-term social integration⁵. These findings suggest that structured, context-sensitive strategies grounded in ethical principles and dialogue can significantly reduce religious tensions and support coexistence in plural societies such as Malaysia.

Societies are weary of the conflicts that arise from religious disputes. As human beings, we often grapple with unresolved feelings about these issues. Is religion the source of conflict? Is it a factor in disharmony? Why can't we adhere to a single religion? Or, if all religions are true, why can't we coexist, accepting each faith as official and thus ending all conflicts? Moreover, if God loves humanity, why is religious conflict allowed to persist?

The Contemporary Issues of Religious Tension in Malaysia

Malaysia is a pluralistic nation known for its religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity. Within this context, interreligious relations play a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and national stability. Despite the country's official commitment to inclusivity and unity, challenges surrounding religious coexistence persist.

In the Malaysian social context, religions are intertwined with ethnicities. Most Malays are Muslims, most Chinese are Buddhists, and most Indians are Hindus. Given this diverse social demographic landscape, the country has a rich traditional and cultural heritage. In terms of religious affiliation, according to the 2023 census, 63.5% of Malaysians are Muslim, followed by Buddhists (18.7%), Christians (9.1%),

⁵ Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali, Wan Ariffin Wan Yon & Suraya Sintang, "Toleransi dan Pluralisme Menurut Pengalaman Masyarakat Bidayah," *Jurnal Usuluddin* 40 (2014), 100.

Hindus (6.1%), Atheists (1.8%), and other religious believers (0.9%).⁶

However, this diverse religious landscape also presents significant challenges, particularly in the form of interreligious tensions that are often influenced by ethnic identities. In a multireligious society like Malaysia, such issues are difficult to avoid and can erupt unexpectedly. Facing all the challenges, Malaysia's Social Hostilities Index (SHI) score has shown an upward trajectory, increasing from a low level in 2009 to a moderate level in 2022, as reported by the Pew Research Centre.⁷

According to the Inspector-General of Police, Tan Sri Razarudin Husain, has likened the exploitation of 3R issues, namely race, religion, and royalty, to a form of modern "warfare" capable of destabilising the nation with just a few keystrokes. Speaking in March 2025, he warned that the deliberate manipulation of sensitive 3R topics, particularly through digital platforms, poses a significant threat to national unity and public order. The statement reflects growing concerns among authorities that socioreligious tensions are no longer confined to physical spaces, but are increasingly being fuelled and weaponized online, where inflammatory content can spread rapidly, provoke unrest, and deepen divisions among Malaysia's diverse communities.⁸

⁶ Department of Statistic Malaysia, "Kawasanku," *OpenDOSM* 30 August 2023, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://open.dosm.gov.my/dashboard/kawasanku>.

⁷ Pew Research Center, "Appendix B: Social Hostilities Index," *Pew Research Center*, accessed 1 December 2025, https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2024/12/PR_2024.12.18_restrictions-on-religion-2022_appendix-b.pdf

⁸ MalayMail, "IGP: '3R' Issues Like 'Warfare', Could Tear Malaysia Apart," *MalayMail* 12 March 2025, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/03/12/igp-3r->

In the same vein, according to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), in collaboration with major social media platforms, it removed 1,454 pieces of content related to the 3R issues, religion, race and royalty, between January and March 2024. Notably, religion-related hate speech made up the largest share, with 727 cases, followed by race-related content (588) and monarchy-related content (139). For comparison, 1,633 3R-related contents were removed throughout 2023, suggesting a steep surge in the first quarter of 2025.⁹

These data reflect the growing role of digital platforms in both amplifying and mitigating socioreligious tensions in Malaysia. The disproportionate number of religion-related hate speech cases signals persistent sensitivities around religious identity and expression. It underscores the urgent need for responsible digital governance, public education, and legal mechanisms to preserve social harmony in Malaysia's multireligious society.

In March 2025, controversies regarding unregistered Hindu temples have at times created divisions among religious communities. The issue in this country concerns a long-standing dispute over land ownership and the legal status of numerous Hindu temples, particularly in urban areas such as Kuala Lumpur. Many of these temples are claimed to have been established during the colonial era, often without formal land titles, and their status became ambiguous following independence. A key source of tension is that some temples are located on government land or private property without official authorization,

issues-like-warfare-could-tear-malaysia-apart/169375#google_vignette.

⁹ Bernama, "1,454 Kandungan 3R dalam Media Sosial Diturunkan Setakat Ini – Teo," 7 April 2024, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/1454-kandungan-3r-dalam-media-sosial-diturunkan-setakat-ini-teo-465595>

thereby making them vulnerable to demolition or relocation. The situation escalated further with the controversy surrounding the relocation of the Dewi Sri Pathrakaliamman Temple in Kuala Lumpur to make way for the construction of a mosque, which sparked public outrage and allegations of religious discrimination.¹⁰

This issue touches on several sensitive areas, including the right to worship, minority rights, and the intersection of religion and politics. It has evolved into a national debate, with civil society groups, religious organizations, and legal bodies demanding clearer policies and legal protections for religious sites. The matter continues to fuel public discourse and legal challenges, reflecting deeper concerns about religious equity and the treatment of minority communities in Malaysia.

In another incident that heightened socioreligious tensions in Malaysia, Maestra Broadcast Sdn Bhd, the operator of local radio station Era FM, was fined RM250,000 under Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998.¹¹ The penalty was imposed after a viral video emerged showing three DJs mocking Hindu religious practices, which many viewed as deeply offensive to the Hindu community.¹²

¹⁰ New Straits Times, "Be Mindful of Your Words, Ramanan Says Amid Temple Relocation Talks," *New Straits Times*, 25 March 2025, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/03/1193046/dewi-sri-pathrakaliamman-temple-management-agrees-relocate>.

¹¹ Malaysiakini, "Era FM Operator Slapped with RM250k Fine Over Insult on Hindu Ritual," *Malaysiakini* 11 March 2025, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/736962>.

¹² The Straits Times, "Malaysia Radio Station Operator Fined \$75,400 After Djs Mock Hindu Religion," *The Straits Times*, 12 March 2025, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysia-radio-station-era-fm-operator-fined-75400-but-licence-remains-active-after-djs-mock-hindu>.

This episode is one of several incidents that underscore the fragile nature of interreligious relations in Malaysia. It illustrates how digital content and media personalities can inadvertently or negligently provoke deep offence across faith lines, potentially fuelling wider distrust or backlash. The significant fine reflects the government's increasing effort to curb content that may threaten national unity and interfaith respect.

Closely related to these concerns, several incidents have deeply offended the Muslim community in Malaysia, further straining interreligious relations. The sale of so-called "halal" ham sandwiches¹³ and socks bearing the name of Allah at KK Mart¹⁴ sparked widespread outrage, as many Muslims perceived these acts as blatant disrespect toward their religious beliefs. Many Muslims in the country remain hurt by a viral video showing a Muslim woman performing stand-up comedy that appeared to insult Islamic values,¹⁵ which triggered further anger and disappointment. These incidents, though differing in form, share a common thread: a perceived insensitivity toward Islamic principles, which has significantly contributed to rising interreligious tensions in the country.

From the above issues, it can be concluded that there are five main themes of interreligious challenges in

¹³ Ercy Gracella Ajos, "Isu 'Ham, Cheese' Meragukan di UM: JAKIM Sahkan Produk Tak Miliki Sijil Halal," *Berita Harian*, 13 January 2025, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/nasional/2025/01/1348793/isu-ham-cheese-meragukan-di-um-jakim-sahkan-produk-tak-miliki-sijil>.

¹⁴ Malaya Daily, "Isu Stoking Kalimah Allah: 42 Laporan, Polis Buka Kertas Siasatan," *Malaya Daily*, 18 March 2024, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://malayadaily.com/berita/isu-stoking-kalimah-allah-42-laporan-polis-buka-kertas-siasatan/>.

¹⁵ Mohammad Khairil Ashraf Mohd Khalid, "Kelab Komedi Buat Laporan Polis Wanita Hina Agama," *Sinar Harian* 9 July 2022, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/210772/berita/semasa/kelab-komedi-buat-laporan-polis-wanita-hina-agama>.

Malaysia, were digitalisation and amplification of interreligious tension, sensitivities surrounding religious symbols, practices, and sacred expressions, contestation over religious spaces and legal ambiguities, minority rights, equity, and public perception of treatment and fragility of interreligious trust and communal relationships. This raises an important question: Can a multireligious nation truly live together in peace? Is religion itself the root cause of tension, or is it the attitudes and actions of its adherents that give rise to such conflicts? Can religion instead serve as a foundation for harmony, and what is Islam's perspective on these questions?

Social Dimension of Religion as a Foundation of Socioreligious Harmony

Recognising the multiple dimensions of religion is crucial to interreligious studies, as it highlights that religious life is not limited to doctrine or belief alone. Instead, it encompasses rituals, social structures, ethical frameworks, communal identity, and lived experiences. By acknowledging these diverse dimensions, researchers are better equipped to understand how religious groups interpret symbols, respond to perceived threats, negotiate shared spaces, and engage in interfaith relationships. This multidimensional approach also helps avoid reductionist interpretations of religious behaviour. It enables a more nuanced analysis of how interreligious tensions arise, evolve, and are either mitigated or exacerbated within plural societies.¹⁶

Based on literature reviews, religion has been conceptualised through various dimensional frameworks. Religion is viewed through five dimensions which are community, set of teachings, spirituality, practices and

¹⁶ Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman, *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence: The Muhibbah Perspective (A Collection of Seminar Papers)* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2010), 10.

discourse.¹⁷ In another article, Ninian Smart categorizes religion into six dimensions: ritual, mythological, doctrinal, ethical, social, and experiential.¹⁸ In contrast to Frazer and Smart, an Islamic scholar, Kamar Oniah, categorized religion into two dimensions: the faith dimension and the social dimension. The two dimensions of religion that are faith and social dimension were derived from the concept of religion in Islam, that is, the relation of humans to God (*habl min Allah*) and the relation of people to other people (*habl min al-nas*) as interpreted by Wahbah al-Zuhayli regarding verses Ali-Imran, 3:103 and 3:112.¹⁹

Kamar Oniah argues that, to achieve harmony, religious adherents must focus on understanding the social dimensions of religion rather than its faith aspects.²⁰ Emphasizing faith can lead to conflicts, as individuals may struggle to assert the superiority of their own religious truths. Regarding the faith dimension, religions are exclusive because each religion understands religious artefacts of faith based on its own perspectives and worldview. These religious artefacts are scriptures and sacred texts, belief systems and theologies, doctrines and dogmas, and rituals and rites.²¹ Thus, all matters regarding the faith dimension, such as spiritual matters and the relationship with God, are termed as intra-personal relationships.²²

¹⁷ Owen Frazer & Richard Friedli, *Approaching Religion in Conflict Transformation: Concepts, Cases and Practical Implications* (Zurich: CSS Mediation Resources, 2015), 6.

¹⁸ Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 6-7.

¹⁹ Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Tafsir al-Munir Jilid 2, Terjemahan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2013), 371-379.

²⁰ Kamar Oniah, *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence*, 11.

²¹ Muhammad al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), 29.

²² Kamar Oniah, *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence*, 12.

On the other hand, regarding the social dimension of religion, it is argued that different worldviews are translated into the lives of adherents through commonalities in value systems, codes of conduct, ethics, and norms and mores, among others. It focuses on how people should be inclusive and relate to others. The relationship with others, including association with fellow humans, is termed as inter-personal relationship.²³ In addition, religion plays a role in providing guidelines on proper conduct on how to interact between each other within the human sphere and civilization.²⁴ Since the faith dimension is represented by intra-personal relationship and the social dimension is represented by inter-personal relationship, thus, in this article, the social dimension will be chosen to represent the relationship among the religious adherents, whatever their religion may be.

Kamar Oniah supports that at the social level, religions tend to concur more than they differ, are more inclusive, having many similar values and concerns with each other.²⁵ In her review of several religions in the world, in fact, what are regarded as good by the standards of a religious community are often regarded as good by the standards of other religious communities. Similarly, Frazer & Friedli found that religion is a community uniting factor rather than a dividing factor that promotes conflict.²⁶ This view has been supported by Linehan, who wrote that due to the religious factor, communal cooperation can be harnessed for the nation and peacebuilding.²⁷ In summary,

²³ Kamar Oniah, *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence*, 12.

²⁴ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam: Faham Agama dan Asas Akhlak* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Anda Akademik 1977), 29.

²⁵ Kamar Oniah, *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence*, 19.

²⁶ Frazer & Friedli, *Approaching Religion in Conflict*, 13.

²⁷ Linehan, Margaret D., *Varieties of Muslim Nonviolence: Three Muslim Movements of Nonviolence and Peace Building* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University, 2013), 59.

socioreligious is focused on the social dimension of religion. Special attention is given to the social aspect, as the core discussion of this research is to describe the phenomenon of the harmonic relation of religious adherents. In summary, the term socioreligious in this article is defined as "the social dimension of religion, where religion is viewed from the sociologist's perspective on how the religion plays a role in fostering harmony in society."

The Pursuit of Harmony in Multireligious Societies

In the pursuit of socioreligious harmony, understanding the concept of harmony is essential, as it has generated considerable academic debate. Some define harmony as 'peace without war' as measured in the Global Peace Index (GPI). This definition is not suitable to portray the concept of harmony, as a harmonious society does not mean that it is free from war and conflict.²⁸ The same applies to happiness that is measured by the Global Happiness Index (GHI), where one's happiness gives no meaning when the inter-relation of the society is abused.²⁹ This article also argues that there is no freedom as measured by the Government Restriction Index (GRI), which is claimed to be the mother of harmony, if there is no ethic fertilized in social interaction.³⁰ As religion provides ethical guidelines for human interaction, the shared values of respect, cooperation, and non-violence will foster a harmonious interaction.

Harmony, which is assigned towards many concepts such as politics, law, theology, and philosophy, is analyzed in relation to the attached concepts. Similarly with the

²⁸ Daniel A. Bell & Yingchuan Mo, "Harmony in the World 2013: The Ideal and the Reality," *Social Indicators Research* 118(2) (2014): 797-818.

²⁹ Daniel A. Bell & Yingchuan Mo, "Harmony in the World 2013", 802.

³⁰ Daniel A. Bell & Yingchuan Mo, "Harmony in the World 2013", 802.

concept of religious harmony, where the notion of harmony is attached to religion, such a concept could be analyzed in the context of religion or any of the dimensions of religion. The term socio refers to society, where, in this article, the socioreligious term views religion from a social dimension. In this article, the term socioreligious harmony is defined as:

A peaceful environment in which different religious groups are able to live together as a result of acceptance of any religious differences, having mutual understanding, the ability to cooperate in the environment of right and justice given, as well as the ability to deal with conflicts wisely within a multireligious society.³¹

The possibilities of peace and war can be understood by examining their differences and commonalities from a religious perspective. The differences of religion in its faith, ritual, and belief should not be disputed to foster religious harmony. On the other hand, religious commonality can be seen in its ethics and humanity, as all religious teachings guide the religious adherents to be kind to others.³² Without humanity kinship over the religious kinship, millions of human lives have been destroyed, and human dignity has been trampled upon.³³

Thus, it can be justified that there is a significant relationship of parallel understanding of what constitutes a harmonic relationship between religions. Chandra

³¹ Atifah Ahmad Yusoff et al., "Indicators for Socioreligious Harmony Index (SRHI) Instrument for Malaysia: Findings of FDM Expert Panel," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* 26(S) (2018), 58.

³² Kamar Oniah, *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence*, 54.

³³ Chandra Muzaffar, "Morality in Public Life: The Challenge before Religion," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 19(3) (2010), 92.

Muzaffar proposed that the shared moral values and virtues are the ethical principles that run through all religions like a golden thread. The golden rule of life, which is also called the mother of ethics, is vital to harmonious relationships between multireligious societies since it induces mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.³⁴

In the same stance, Ahmad Tarmizi Talib and Sarjit S. Gill suggested that there is a need to find common values in society to achieve socioreligious harmony.³⁵ Agreeing with Chandra Muzaffar and Kamar Oniah, he emphasized the importance of recognizing shared values acceptable to the respective religious teachings and cultures in society. Thus, it will be easier to reach points of agreement, which might ease any religious tensions.

No doubt, religion plays a crucial role in providing humanity with universal ethical norms and moral values. Therefore, religion is not the actual cause of conflict, rather, the actual problem lies in human beings who are unable to live up to the most fundamental ethical standards that have been taught by the various prophets of God to humanity.³⁶ Thus, to constitute harmonic relationships between religions, it is necessary to examine the perspectives of commonalities of shared values instead of differences in the way the adherents conceive of life.

Muslim and Non-Muslim 'Musalimun' Living Peacefully in the Contemporary Age

In the contemporary context, in which Muslims and non-Muslims live side by side within the same societies, differs significantly from earlier periods when Muslims largely lived in Muslim-majority regions, while non-Muslims

³⁴ Chandra Muzaffar, "Morality in Public Life", 92.

³⁵ Ahmad Tarmizi Talib & Sarjit S. Gill, "Socioreligious Tolerance: Exploring the Malaysian Experience," *Global Journal of Human Social Science* 12(8) (2012), 53.

³⁶ Muzaffar, "Morality in Public Life," 101.

resided in their own separate territories.³⁷ Yusuf al-Qaradawi argues that Ibn Taymiyyah issued his strict *fatwa* on offering congratulations to non-Muslims on their festive occasions according to the realities of his own time. However, al-Qaradawi argues that, if Ibn Taymiyyah were alive today, witnessing the complexity of global relations, the way the world has effectively become a small village, and the increased need for Muslims to interact closely with non-Muslims, he might have reconsidered his *fatwa*.³⁸

Al-Qaradawi notes that non-Muslims now lead in fields such as science and industry, yet many still hold deep misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. This makes it even more essential for Muslim preachers to engage with them, demonstrating that true Islam promotes peace rather than violence, and conveys messages of goodwill rather than negativity. In this context, offering congratulations to non-Muslims on their festive occasions, so long as it does not affirm their beliefs, may help change their perceptions and open their hearts to a better understanding of Islam.³⁹

Al-Qaradawi emphasized that displaying good *akhlaq* towards non-Muslims serves as a form of *da'wah* to them. He explained that;

Considering history objectively, we find that Islam spread in what we call "The Arab world" and "the Islamic world" through some Muslims, whether merchants or scholars. They migrated to these lands in Asia and Africa, mingled with the indigenous people and dealt with them. Consequently, their good manners,

³⁷ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh of Muslim Minorities: Contentious Issues & Recommended Solutions* (Cairo: Al-Falah Foundation, 2003), 146.

³⁸ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh of Muslim Minorities*, 146.

³⁹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh of Muslim Minorities*, 146.

sincerity, and religion led these natives to love them and to convert to Islam in multitudes.⁴⁰

In fact, non-Muslims who live peacefully are also referred to as non-Muslims who are '*Musalimun*'.⁴¹ According to the terminological definition, they are those who remain in a state of disbelief, yet do not wage war against the Muslim community, nor express hatred or hostility toward Islam in any form, and who live peacefully with the Muslims.⁴² Those who fall into the category of *Musalimun* in the context of *fiqh* are the *Ahl al-Zimmah*⁴³ and the *al-Musta'minun*.⁴⁴

Al-Qaradawi also emphasized that Islam appreciates non-Muslims that lives peacefully with the Muslims, where they do not put up fights and brew hatred against Muslims, where they must be treated politely, their rights must be given, and they must be protected.⁴⁵ He also argued that;

⁴⁰ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh of Muslim Minorities*, 5.

⁴¹ Johar Arifin, "Hadis-hadis Nabi dalam Berinteraksi dengan Non-Muslim (Musalimun)," *Toleransi: Media Ilmiah Komunikasi Umat Beragama* 2(2) (2010), 165.

⁴² Nuruddin Mohd Tahir al-Jazairi, *Kitab Asalib Ta'amul ma'a al-Khusus fi Da' al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyah* (Irbid, Jordan: Dar al-Kitab, 2005), 16.

⁴³ *Ahl al-Zimmah*, in technical terminology, refers to non-Muslims who live under the permanent protection of the Islamic state after agreeing to pay the *jizyah* and comply with the laws of the Islamic state. See 'Abd Allah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-Thurayqi, *al-Isti'anan bi Ghayr al-Muslimin fi al-Fiqh al-Islami* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1993), 138.

⁴⁴ *Al-Musta'minun*, in technical terminology, are defined as those who enter the territory of the Islamic state by seeking security and protection. See Muhammad Amin Ibn 'Abidin, *Rad al-Mukhtar 'ala al-Dar al-Mukhtar Sharh Tanwir al-Absar* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994), 6: 275.

⁴⁵ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fikah Minoriti Muslim Kehidupan Kaum Muslimin di Tengah Masyarakat Bukan Muslimin (Fi Fiqh al-Aqalliyat al-Muslimin Hayat al-Muslimin Wasath al-Mujtama'at al-*

On the other hand, even in countries conquered by Muslim armies to remove material hardships before Islam and convey its message to their people, they were entitled to choose their religion. Thus, these people adopted Islam willingly, so much that the Umayyad rulers used to exact Jizyah (the tribute) from newly converted Muslims in Egypt because of the large numbers of those who had embraced Islam. But Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (may Allah be pleased with him) abolished this tribute declaring his well-known saying, "Surely, Allah has sent Muhammad as a guide not as a Jizyah collector."⁴⁶

This is one of the features of Islam, a religion that brings kindness to all creatures on the Earth, as has been stated in the Qur'an.⁴⁷ It has been spelled out in the Qur'an and has also been shown by the Prophet and His Companions. Clearly, Islam supports the dignity of everyone, whatever his religion; this is proof of Islam's main characteristic, which is "a blessing for all" (*'rahmat li al-'alamin'*).

Human Brotherhood as a Foundation for Muslim and Non-Muslim Harmonious Relationship

Although people adhere to different religions, this does not necessitate the severing of bonds of brotherhood. The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is grounded in shared humanity. Understanding this concept is essential for fostering harmony in multireligious

Ukra, trans. H.M. Yusuf Sinaga (Kuala Lumpur: Seribu Dinar Sdn. Bhd, 2015), 146.

⁴⁶ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fikah Minoriti Muslim Kehidupan Kaum Muslimin di Tengah Masyarakat Bukan Muslimin*, 146.

⁴⁷ Surah al-Anbiya' 21: 107.

societies, as it encourages respect for differences, reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings, and facilitates cooperation toward the common good.

As Islam accepts the existence of other religions in the world, the diversity on the Earth cannot be denied because it is the must (*Sunnatullah*) of creation.⁴⁸ In other words, Islam accepts religious plurality but strictly denies the truth of others except Islam. Due to that, in the lens of humanity, Islam acknowledges their human rights that need to be treated politely.

In this article, the relation of religious adherents can be categorized into two, namely humanity brotherhood and religious brotherhood. As human originates from oneself (*nafs wahidah*),⁴⁹ thus, the relationship of Muslims between non-Muslims is termed as biological brotherhood⁵⁰ or humanity brotherhood.⁵¹ Meanwhile, Muslims and Muslims are in religious brotherhood.⁵²

And it was narrated from Abu Shurayh that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "*By Allah, he does not believe; by Allah, he does not believe; by Allah, he does not believe.*" *It was said: O Messenger of Allah, who is that? He said: "The one whose neighbour is not safe from his annoyance."*⁵³

⁴⁸ Surah Yunus 10:99; Surah al-Maidah 5: 48.

⁴⁹ Surah al-Nisa' 4: 1.

⁵⁰ Mohd Sani Badron, "Interaksi Penganut Agama: Latar Belakang dan Motif." *Muzakarah Pakar Pendekatan Fiqh Ta'amil dalam Hubungan Penganut Agama di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia, 2016), 6.

⁵¹ Mohd Faizal Abdul Khir, "Interaksi dengan Bukan Islam Berdasarkan al-Quran dan Hadis," in *Islam dan Hubungan Antara Penganut Agama*, eds. Azizan Baharudin, Enizahura Abdul Aziz and Mohd Amiruddin Kamarulzaidi, (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia, 2019), 25.

⁵² Surah al-Tawbah 9: 11.

⁵³ Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari (Arabic English)*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Hadith no. 6016 (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997), 8: 37-38.

Thus, in the humanity brotherhood, it was an obligation for all religious adherents to be merciful and compassionate towards others. It has been advocated in the Qur'an where Allah does not forbid any kindness to be acted on them.⁵⁴ In addition, Allah asks the adherents to be kind to whomever the neighbour.⁵⁵ This honour teaching not only creates peacefulness but foster comfort feeling among the religious adherents. Besides, Islam teaches Muslim to not violate other Muslims, and to other non-Muslim, thus fostering non-violence environment in society.

Mutual Tolerance (*Tasamuh*) in the Malaysian Federal Constitution

The widening generational gap has become one of the factors contributing to contemporary claims that the Malaysian Federal Constitution is unjust, non-inclusive, and discriminatory towards other religions and ethnicities. A segment of the younger generation today demonstrates a lack of constitutional literacy, with some even proposing that the Constitution be revised to reflect present social realities rather than the historical circumstances under which it was formulated. Such propositions, however, overlook a fundamental truth, that it is precisely the existence of this Constitution which has preserved Malaysia's sovereignty, peace, and independence, and which continues to command tolerance and respect for the nation within the global community.⁵⁶

In fact, *tasamuh* is reflected in the Malaysian Federal Constitution, where other religions can be practiced

⁵⁴ Surah al-Mumtahanah 60: 8.

⁵⁵ Surah al-Nisa' 4: 36.

⁵⁶ Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali & Mohd Herzali Mohd Haled, "Toleransi Beragama dan Amalannya di Malaysia: Rujukan kepada Artikel 11 Perlembagaan Persekutuan Malaysia," *Jurnal Usuluddin* 27 (2008), 82.

peacefully besides Islam. A defining feature of Malaysia's constitutional identity lies in Article 3, which declares Islam as the *religion of the Federation*, while guaranteeing freedom for other religions to be practiced peacefully within the country. The position of Islam as the religion of the Federation was securely safeguarded by the constitution, as it is deeply shaped by its long historical trajectory, in which Islam has been the religion of most of the Malay population long before the advent of colonial powers.⁵⁷

Furthermore, the sovereignty and authority of the Malay Rulers as the Heads of Islam in their respective states are enshrined under *Article 3(2)*, while the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* serves as the Head of Islam for states without rulers and for the Federal Territories, as stipulated in *Articles 3(3) and 3(5)*. The administration of Islamic institutions, correspondingly, falls under both Federal and State jurisdictions, as outlined in *Article 12(2)* of the Federal Constitution. These clauses represent the constitutionally safeguarded position of Islam as the religion of the Federation that must be tolerated by the non-Muslim.

Tasamuh is one of the characteristics of Islam in interacting harmoniously with others. This principle has been advocated in the Qur'an and has been exemplified by the Prophet and His Companions. As stated in the Qur'an, Islam exerts no compulsion on other religious adherents to be a believer in the religion.⁵⁸ Besides, *Tasamuh* is also shown in Surah al-Kafirun, 109:1-6, where this sentence

⁵⁷ Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali & Mohd Herzali Mohd Haled, "Toleransi Beragama dan Amalannya di Malaysia: Rujukan kepada Artikel 11 Perlembagaan Persekutuan Malaysia," 82.

⁵⁸ Surah al-Baqarah 2: 256

has become the foundation of tolerance discussion during the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights 1981.⁵⁹

Historically, Prophet Muhammad has shown how *tasamuh* has internalized in the soul of Islam. In the Charter Medina, the Prophet acknowledged the rights of other religious adherents to live in peaceful coexistence. However, the charter tied them with several obligations that need to be obeyed to get the privilege of freedom to profess and practice their religion. They need to obey the Prophet as a Leader, to pay taxes, and to defend the country from enemy attack.⁶⁰ The mutual give and take that had happened in the time of the Prophet was the successful tolerance and sustained socioreligious harmony of the multireligious society.

The concept of mutual tolerance during the time of the Prophet has never been disputed. However, today, the application of tolerance as a method of guaranteeing socioreligious harmonic relation is denied, especially by the West.⁶¹ Furthermore, based on the West's perspective, the concept of tolerance means acceptance without a distinctive borderline. However, the West's concept of tolerance is clearly opposed to *tasamuh* in Islam, as will be discussed in the following section.

Tasamuh is an Arabic word, built on the foundation of the word *tafa'ul*, which requires action involving two parties. It means mutual tolerance from both sides. It differs from the English definition, which only involves one party. Secondly, the meaning of *tasamuh* itself is "compromise

⁵⁹ Mohamad Zaidi Abdul Rahman, "Mengurus Hak Beragama Bukan Muslim Dari Perspektif Siasah Syar'iyah," *Jurnal Usuluddin* 36 (2012), 114.

⁶⁰ Wan Norhasniah Wan Husin & Haslina Ibrahim, "Religious Freedom, The Malaysian Constitution and Islam: A Critical Analysis," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 217 (2016), 1222.

⁶¹ Ruhaizah Abdul Ghani & Jaffary Awang, "Resolving Conflicting Issues in a Pluralistic Society: Tolerance or Respect," in 9th International Academic Conference, Istanbul (2014), 2.

and open-minded in accepting the reality of ethnic diversity, culture, and religion as *Sunnatullah*, as what has been decreed by Allah". Thus, *tasamuh* means mutual tolerance, mutual understanding, and mutual acceptance. Therefore, the mutual give and take of *tasamuh* will foster socioreligious harmony.

On the other hand, a different result of West tolerance, where it led to a negative aspect, due to a party that compromises has to force aside their own belief.⁶² The concept of Western tolerance, which requires people to accept everything, including beliefs and practices, has been rejected by Islamic scholars, who believe that *tasamuh* should not affect religious beliefs. It has been defined as "an attitude of openness, to listen to different views of others, and functions two-way, offering one's view and accepting others, and does not affect the religious beliefs of each other in that shared space".⁶³

To summarize, mutual tolerance based on Islamic perspectives is *tasamuh* itself. Its concept 'firm on its principle, tolerance with attitude' is a prominent concept, where tolerance is only allowed in matters that do not violate the guidelines and its teachings, not affect religious beliefs, and at the same time, tolerance with attitude, where respect and kindness are shown toward other religious adherents. This glorious concept has contributed to a harmonious environment of socioreligious harmony in the past and should be exemplified in these challenging times.

Fiqh al-Ta'ayush in the Context of Socioreligious Harmony

In the Malaysian demographic context, where Muslims and non-Muslims live side by side, clear

⁶² Ruhaizah Abdul Ghani & Jaffary Awang, "Resolving Conflicting Issues in a Pluralistic Society: Tolerance or Respect," 3.

⁶³ Ruhaizah Abdul Ghani & Jaffary Awang, "Resolving Conflicting Issues in a Pluralistic Society: Tolerance or Respect," 5.

guidelines for harmonious coexistence are necessary. This demographic reality underscores the need for a normative framework that not only acknowledges diversity but also guides ethical interaction among communities. Within this analytical transition from describing Malaysia's multireligious landscape to identifying mechanisms that support peaceful coexistence, *Fiqh al-Ta'ayush* becomes a relevant and necessary point of discussion. As a jurisprudential approach rooted in Islamic ethics, it directly responds to the complexities of living alongside people of different faiths, offering principles that are both theologically grounded and socially applicable.

Fiqh al-Ta'ayush, or "jurisprudence of peaceful coexistence," provides the Islamic foundation for cultivating unity, cooperation, and dignity across religious boundaries. Drawing on core values such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), justice ('*adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and mutual understanding (*ta'aruf*), it establishes a framework for harmonious interreligious relations that aligns with Islam's overarching vision of *rahmat li al-'alamin*. Zulkefli bin Aini dan Wan Nurul Anis binti Wan Ismail emphasize that *fiqh al-ta'ayush* encourages respectful engagement and protection of religious rights.⁶⁴ Kamar Oniah highlights its practical relevance in plural societies such as Malaysia.⁶⁵

Co-existence, according to her, indicates that each group has its own identity and individuality, which includes ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic differences. They live as a society or in the same country. She believed that harmonious and pleasant coexistence is the foundation for building a prosperous nation. Through methods such as

⁶⁴ Zulkefli Aini & Wan Nurul Anis Wan Ismail, "Amalan Konsep Fiqh al-Ta'ayusy Sebagai Wahana Dakwah Masyarakat Majmuk," in *Rahmah li al-'Alamin: Dakwah dalam Masyarakat Majmuk di Malaysia* (Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Islam, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2018), 26.

⁶⁵ Kamar Oniah, *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence*, 60.

structured interfaith dialogue, community-level cooperation, shared ethical initiatives, and fair public policies, this jurisprudence translates Islamic moral principles into lived social practice. By grounding coexistence in both ethical imperatives and practical mechanisms, *fiqh al-ta'ayush* not only complements Malaysia's plural reality but also provides a resilient framework for strengthening long-term socioreligious harmony.⁶⁶

Reflecting on their responsibility as Allah's vicegerents, Muslims must prioritise 'aqidah above all as the foundation of human unity. The following passage from *Khayr Ummah* demonstrates that 'aqidah is at the basis of propagating *da'wah*. A strong religious conviction leads individuals to propagate virtues and avoid vices, as Allah declared in the Qur'an: "You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. "You enjoin what is right, prohibit what is bad, and believe in Allah. If only the people of Scripture had believed, things would have been better for them. Among them are believers, yet the majority are brazenly disobedient."⁶⁷

It is vital to emphasise that interaction includes more than just developing relationships; it also requires cognitive processes. Understanding the fundamental principles of interaction, including *ta'aruf* (knowing each other), *tafahum* (mutual understanding), *takaful* (mutual protection), *ta'awun* (mutual help and cooperation), *fiqh al-ta'amul*, and *fiqh al-ta'ayush*, leads to a more positive attitude towards *akhlaq Islamiyyah*.⁶⁸ *Al-akhlaq al-Islamiyyah* is a critical aspect for societal well-being,

⁶⁶ Kamar Oniah, *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence*, 60.

⁶⁷ Surah Ali Imran 3: 110.

⁶⁸ Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali, "Kepelbagaian dan Kesatuan dalam Konteks Fiqh al-Ta'ayush di Malaysia Menurut Perspektif Pemikiran Islam," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 22(1) (2020), 82.

particularly in multi-ethnic and multireligious communities.

As a result, these are the aspects acknowledged as important contributors to socioreligious peace in multireligious societies. It is therefore not erroneous to believe that a Muslim community that adorns itself with such ideals might be described as an *ummatan wasatan* that is, a just and balanced country. The Qur'an quotes Allah as saying: "And so We have made you believers an upright community (*ummatan wasatan*) so that you may be witnesses over humanity and that the Messenger may be a witness over you;"⁶⁹ this is what.

Dialogue as the Underlying Medium of Fiqh al-Ta'ayush in Malaysia: Its Practices and Challenges

To communicate effectively in a pluralistic setting and preserve the mutuality of living (*ta'ayush*), dialogue serves as a space to gather and diffuse divergent ideas. This kind of space is essential to ventilate emotions in difficult conversations, celebrate differences and maintain peaceful co-existence. Dialogue is a conversation marked by mutual respect in listening and speaking between two or more parties of differing views.⁷⁰ It is also a safe space to voice out unique perspectives.⁷¹ The art of dialogue is deeply rooted in Islamic traditions as stated in the Qur'an, through

⁶⁹ Surah al-Baqarah 2: 143.

⁷⁰ See Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor (London: Kegan Paul, 1949), 5; Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London: Routledge, 1990), 6; David Bohm, *On Dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6-7; David Bohm, introduction to *Unfolding Meaning: A Weekend of Dialogue with David Bohm* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), x; Leonard Swidler, "Understanding Dialogue." in *Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots*, ed. Rebecca Kratz May (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 2008), 9.

⁷¹ Muḥammad Shafiq & Mohammed Abu Nimer, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Guide for Muslims* (Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2007), 7.

the practice of the Prophet Muhammad himself,⁷² and throughout the scholarship of Islam in various disciplines.

The key idea of dialogue in Islam is stated in the Qur'an: "*O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.*"⁷³ The verse calls for mutual learning from each other due to the diversity that is inevitable in human social life. Based on this spirit, dialogue is instrumental in a multireligious and multiracial landscape.

In Malaysia, notably before independence, interreligious dialogue was spontaneous and organic in the form of life dialogue. Through life dialogue, adherents of different religious teachings relate with each other on a mundane basis, communicating as members of the neighbourhood and society. Transaction, commerce and marriage were some of the activities that bound different people in a harmonious interaction. The harmonious interactions were interrupted with colonisations by the Portuguese, British and Japanese.⁷⁴ Portuguese colonists imposed marriages between Christians and local people. On the other hand, the Japanese stirred up conflicts between the Chinese and Malays.

These early seeds of social disharmony were worsened by the British colonists, who segregated different races to different locations based on their respective economic activities. The segregation made the Malays suffered since they were placed on the disadvantaged. Eventually, the

⁷² Alwani Ghazali, *Interreligious Dialogue Model in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad* (New York: Routledge, 2024), 70.

⁷³ Surah al-Hujurat 49: 13.

⁷⁴ Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli & Jaffary Awang, "Sejarah Dialog Antara Agama di Malaysia: A History of Interfaith Dialogue in Malaysia," *Jurnal Hadhari: An International Journal* 10(2) (2018), 171.

formation of 'Malaysia' as a country post-independence was difficult. Not long after independence, there was a tragic clash and bloodshed between Malays and Chinese, known as the 13th May 1969 incident. In the catastrophe, more than a hundred people lost their lives. It was due to the tragedy that many efforts and initiatives for dialogue were taken by the government henceforth.

In the early 1970s, the practice of interreligious dialogue became instrumental as a reaction to the Islamisation process. Non-Muslim religious leaders worried that more Islamic values were imbued in the governmental sectors. They perceived Islamisation as a threat to their identity and religious survival. Therefore, a platform named Malaysian Council for Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Taoists (MCCBHST) was established to discuss common fears among non-Muslims. Some Muslim NGOs, such as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) or Malaysia Islamic Youth Movement, responded to the concern. This was the turning point of more activities of interreligious dialogue.⁷⁵

To date, various forms of interreligious dialogue activities have been organized by different parties, such as government agencies and non-governmental organizations alike. The most popular form of interreligious dialogue is a forum participated by representatives of different religions who are experts in the subject matter. Commonly, general issues are discussed, such as human dignity, environmental issues, the meaning of independence, and education. For instance, the Malaysian Institute of Understanding has organized a Regional Southeast Asia Human Dignity Conference in Kuala Lumpur in early August 2024.

⁷⁵ Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli & Jaffary Awang, "Sejarah Dialog Antara Agama di Malaysia: A History of Interfaith Dialogue in Malaysia," 177.

Other activities to bridge different religious believers through dialogue are storytelling⁷⁶ and visits to houses of worship. The latter is not popular among the Malaysian community since it is prone to sparking controversies. An instance of such controversy was the Hindu temple visitation by a group of Muslims organized by the Perak State Religious Council on the 2nd of August 2024.⁷⁷ During the visit, a female participant was interviewed by the media on her visit experience. This participant expressed her delightful feelings about her new experience. She stated that there are many similarities between Islam and Hinduism. Her statement was later condemned and ridiculed by many Muslims on social media. This is because 'religious pluralism', a term that connotes a similar value of truth in Islam and other religions, is a taboo.

Undeniably, the equation of interreligious dialogue activities to religious pluralism is one of the main challenges faced by Malaysian interreligious dialogue advocates and practitioners.⁷⁸ Additionally, Wan Sabri

⁷⁶ Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali, Nurfarhana Abdul Rahman, Nurhanisah Senin & Sri Rahayu Dollah, "Storytelling as a Peace Education in Interfaith Dialogue: An Experience Among Selected University Students," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 21(1) (2019), 113.

⁷⁷ Muhammad Zulsyamini Sufian, "Perak Religious Dept Apologises Over Controversial Visit to Hindu Temple" *New Straits Times*, 2 August 2024, accessed 2 December 2025. https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2024/08/1085776/perak-religious-dept-apologises-over-Suri_controversial-visit-hindu-temple.

⁷⁸ Ahmad Mohamad, Wan Zailan Kamaruddin Wan Ali, Alwani Ghazali, Chang Lee Wei & Rosilawati Zainol, "Interreligious Dialogue in Malaysia: Issues of its Implementation," *KATHA- The Official Journal of the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue* 19(1) (2023), 3; Khalif Muammar Harris. *Islam dan Pluralisme Agama: Memperkukuh Tauhid pada Zaman Kekeliruan* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2015), 4; Syamsuddin Arif, *Keberanan al-Quran dan Dialog Antara Agama: Sorotan terhadap Segi-segi*

Wan Yusuf and Arfah Ab Majid⁷⁹ stated that interreligious dialogue has also been misunderstood to have a connection with proselytising. These unfavourable perceptions are more prevalent than accurate information, which led to hesitations about participating in such dialogue.

Government Islamic training centres, such as the Institute of Islamic Training Malaysia, have provided interreligious dialogue training to Muslim leaders. This means modules for interreligious dialogue have been documented to this extent. Nevertheless, the controversy has left a huge gap for interreligious dialogue guidelines to be polished by stakeholders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, religion is not the cause of division, nor should Islam be framed as the source of violent conflict as suggested by Huntington. While interreligious tensions are inevitable, the way they are addressed plays a far more significant role in shaping harmony. Socioreligious harmony can be fostered by understanding the social dimension of religion rather than focusing solely on the faith dimension. By examining the concept of socioreligious harmony from an Islamic perspective through the commonalities of religion, the principle of human brotherhood, the value of mutual tolerance (*tasamuh*), the emphasis on dialogue, and the fostering of peaceful coexistence (*fiqh al-ta'ayush*), a comprehensive framework for harmonious socioreligious relations can be developed. When this understanding is further strengthened by an appreciation of the Federal Constitution, the

Hubungannya dengan Pluralisme Agama: Satu Penelitian Islami. (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia, 2014), 23.

⁷⁹ Wan Sabri Wan Yusuf & Arfah Ab Majid, "Interreligious Dialogue Models in Malaysia" *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah (GJAT)* 2(1) (2012), 9.

continuity of socioreligious harmony in Malaysia becomes more attainable.

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