



IIIT Students' Magazine



Magazine No.2 (February 2025)



Thank You IIIT

A Message from the Graduates

Healing Hearts with Faith: An Islamic Approach to Counselling Practice

The Expected Role of the Islamic Schools

China's First Mosque: Huaisheng Mosque in Guangzhou



Second Edition, 2025
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Editorial Message



In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Welcome to the 2nd edition of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) Students' Magazine!

The IIIT family warmly welcomes you to explore the rich and diverse landscape of Islamic thought through our magazine. This platform is dedicated to sharing insightful reflections on Islam, emphasizing the Integration of Knowledge (IoK), Dawah, and the transformative power of education.

We believe in the profound impact of knowledge on personal and communal growth. Our mission is to offer thought-provoking content that informs, inspires, and delves into Islamic scholarship while addressing contemporary issues through the lens of faith.

We invite you to engage with the magazine, reflect on its ideas, and join the conversation. Your participation, feedback, and contributions are invaluable as we grow. Share your perspectives by submitting articles for publication.

Thank you for being part of the IIIT community. We hope this second edition enriches your understanding, inspires you, and deepens your connection to the essence of Islam. Enjoy the journey!

Warm regards,

Prof Dawood A. Al-Hidabi
Chief Editor and Team Leader

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IIIT STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

NOVEMBER 2024

Weekly Training Program

9TH NOVEMBER 2024

The poster is for a training program. At the top, it features logos for 'Leading the Way' and 'Leading the World', along with a '40' anniversary logo and a sailboat icon. The main title is 'QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS: INSIGHTS AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE'. Below this is the name of the facilitator, 'Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saheed Abdullahi Busari'. To the right of the title, there is a logo with the letters 'إث' and three dots, followed by the text 'Academic & professional'. The facilitator's affiliation is listed as 'ABDULHAMID ABUSULAYMAN KULLIYAH OF ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN SCIENCES'. The date and time are '09 Nov 2024 | Saturday' and '10:00 am. - 1:00 p.m'. The location is 'Auditorium A, Block E2 KOE'. A circular portrait of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saheed Abdullahi Busari is on the right side of the poster.

AN INTERNATIONAL AWARD-WINNING INSTITUTION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

LEADING THE WAY
LEADING THE WORLD

40

إث :
Academic & professional

**QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS:
INSIGHTS AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saheed Abdullahi Busari

ABDULHAMID ABUSULAYMAN KULLIYAH OF
ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN
SCIENCES

09 Nov 2024 | Saturday

10:00 am. - 1:00 p.m

Auditorium A, Block E2 KOE

Weekly Training program facilitated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saheed Abdullah Busari. Topic of discussion is Quantitative & Qualitative Data Analysis: Insights and Practical Experience.

11TH - 13TH NOVEMBER 2024



Youth Leadership Training held at Al- Bukhari International University, organized by NAMA in conjunction with IIIT Students' Office.

Social Activities

16TH NOVEMBER 2024



Futsal Match with Huffaz of the Leadership program . Brother Abdullah Bazyad posing for a picture with fellow players before the game.

23RD NOVEMBER 2024



Weekly Training program facilitated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abdulhamid Mohamed Ali Zaroum. Topic of discussion is Humility and Modesty (Basics of Ethics).

DECEMBER 2024

Training Programs and Workshops

7TH DECEMBER 2024



The topic is Communication, Public Relations, and Influence Skills. Facilitated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aida Binti Mokhtar (Department of Communication, Abdulhamid Abu Sulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences). The program took place on Saturday, 7th December 2024 at Auditorium A, Block E2, Kulliyah of Engineering (KOE)

21ST DECEMBER 2024

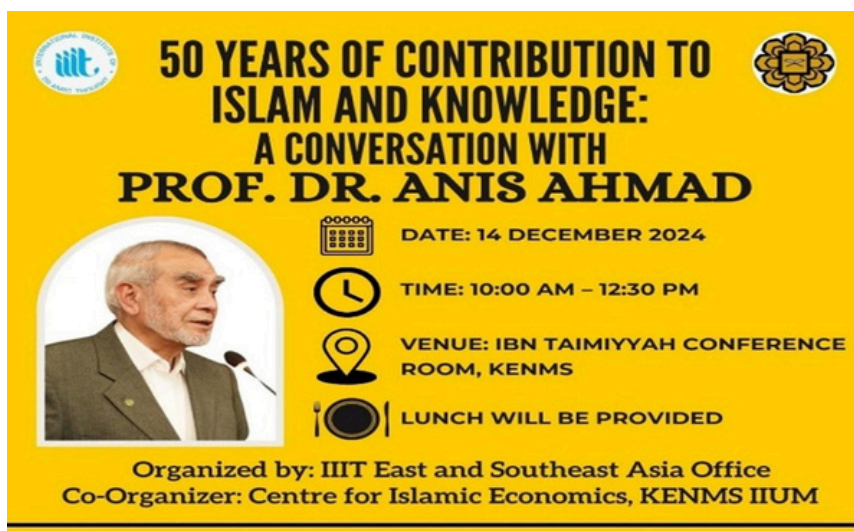


Weekly Training program facilitated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abdulhamid Mohamed Ali Zaroum. Topic of discussion is Humility and Modesty.

IIIT Public Lecture Program

IIIT Students' Office in collaboration with IIIT East and Southeast Asia and the Centre for Islamic Economics (KENMS), IIUM organized a public lecture.

14TH DECEMBER 2024



The program took place on Saturday, 14th December 2024 at IIUM- This event allowed students to gain valuable insights from Prof. Dr. Anis Ahmad, a distinguished scholar with five decades of contributions to Islamic knowledge and education.



Thank You IIIT

In November 2024, IIUM held its 40th convocation, graduating hundreds of students across various faculties and levels of education, including both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. We're proud to acknowledge that IIIT had several of its sponsored students among the graduating cohort, some earning Bachelor's degrees, while others achieved Master's and Ph.D. degrees.

IIIT continues to award scholarships to students' worldwide, opening doors for numerous young Muslim scholars, both male and female, to pursue educational opportunities that might otherwise have been out of reach. For years, IIIT's sponsorship has enabled students from diverse backgrounds to access the transformative education offered by IIUM. This partnership between IIIT and IIUM has not only provided financial support but has also fostered an environment where knowledge is enriched with values, preparing Muslim graduates and future leaders to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Among the 308 Ph.D. graduates was Dr. Adamu Ahmed Wudil from Nigeria, who earned a Ph.D. in Economics. Dr. Adamu completed his Ph.D. in just two years and expressed his gratitude to IIIT. He remarked:

"I am very happy with this achievement and am deeply grateful to the management of IIIT for giving me this incredible opportunity to pursue my studies."

Our editor conducted a short interview with Dr. Adamu to gain more insight into his journey:

1 How long did it take you to complete your Ph.D.? What's your secret?

It took me four semesters to finish. But before I came here, I had already started my Ph.D. in Nigeria in 2018/2019, where I defended my proposal and completed two semesters. However, there was an anticipated strike, which made me decide whether to stay in Nigeria or join IIUM. The risk of staying was high because if the strike occurred, I didn't know when it would end. So, when I got the opportunity, I decided to move to IIUM.

When I arrived, I already had experience with research, presentations, and econometric modeling, which gave me a strong foundation to finish early. It was really challenging, but in the end, I achieved what I set out to do. The secret is prayer. I'd say 99.9% of my Ph.D. was due to prayer, not my ability, capacity, or intelligence. If



you look at my background, it's clear that this was Allah's will, not my own power.

2 What message do you have for IIIT as the sponsor of your academic journey?

I'd like to extend a very big thank you to IIIT for sponsoring my Ph.D. at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and helping me emerge as the best Ph.D. student in the Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences during the university's 40th convocation.

I never imagined traveling abroad for any of my degrees, but IIIT gave me the opportunity to study internationally, connect with different scholars, gain new perspectives on knowledge integration, and become the best version of myself. Long live IIIT! May we continue to serve IIIT and the Muslim Ummah in the future.

3 What advice would you give to other students under IIIT scholarships?

My advice to IIIT-sponsored students is to understand your strengths and weaknesses so you can become the best version of yourself. Don't try to imitate others because everyone has a different capacity and destiny. While others can inspire and motivate you, don't make it a requirement to follow their exact path. Focus on doing your best and keep praying. I wish you all the best in your endeavors. Thank you!

Dr. Adamu currently works as a Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA) in Nigeria. He can be reached at adamwudil@gmail.com

Written by Sherrif Kaisi
Editor



Dr Adamu from Nigeria who graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in economics receiving award of the best student of the Kulliyah of Economics during the convocation in November 2024



Congratulations

IIIT Graduates 2024



Dr. Adamu Ahmed Wudil
PhD in Economics



Br. Abdul Rauf
Mohmed Mahsoom
Master in Arabic Studies
(Linguistics)



Dr. Arafath Careem
PhD in Fiqh & Usul Fiqh

Dr. Mohamed Ashath
PhD in Usuluddin &
Comparative Religion



Sr Sarah Mohammad
PhD, KIRKHS

Sr Noor Ma Xia
Master of Arabics
Studies (Linguistics)

Sr Umme Habiba
Master in KIRKHS

The Expected Role of the *Islamic Schools*



Prof Dr. Dawood Abdulmalek Yahya Al-Hidabi
KOED, IIUM, Malaysia



In principle, the education of children in Islam is the responsibility of the family. Allah said in Surat Al-Tahrim:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا

“O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire”

It's important to note that the education of children in Islam is not solely the responsibility of the family but rather a collective effort. The Muslim family plays a crucial role in the Tarbiyah process, coordinating, supervising, and managing the entire education process of their children.

The Tarbiyah process, a cornerstone of Islamic education, is designed to be all-encompassing. It nurtures not just the mind, but also the heart, soul, and body. This comprehensive approach ensures the development of every aspect of the Muslim personality, be it spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, or social. This holistic approach should reassure us about the thorough development of our children's Islamic personalities, instilling a sense of confidence in the process.

Islam, as a collective religion, underscores the significance of collective action in all spheres of life, particularly in education. The efficacy of education in Islam hinges on a collective approach, with all social agents- the family, the school, the Masjid, the media, the neighbourhood, and others- contributing to the process. This collective responsibility underscores the shared commitment and involvement of all stakeholders in the education of our children.

The Tarbiyah/education system must include cultivating Iman and worship, ethics and wisdom, holistic care and shelter, Islamic guidance, preparing for citizenship and profession, and delivering benefits for the society, the Muslim ummah and humanity in general.

Experience has shown that the most influential factors in the education process are politics and leadership at all levels, namely the state, regional, and school levels. Laws, policies, and procedures are linked to either enhance or put barriers to effective school performance. However, it's important to note that the school principal/ headteacher is the most crucial factor for the school's success. The

school headteacher and his team members, teachers or administration staff, are vehicles for achieving the school's aims. Their role in shaping students' Muslim personalities is of utmost importance, underscoring the comprehensive nature of Islamic education and the pivotal role of school leaders.

The school leader and staff must work collectively and harmoniously to build the future generation of Muslim societies that will succeed in this life and the hereafter.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَلَا كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock”

To achieve success in Tarbiyah, schools have to take into account the following:

- Carefully recruit the right school leader, administrative staff, and teachers. They must be competent, ethically committed, professional, and passionate about education. Their work and behaviour should be rooted in the Islamic faith. They must be leading examples for their students and the community.
- The school is well-connected with the students' families.
- The school curriculum and subjects are relevant to students' environment, context, and belief system.
- The education system connects Iman and knowledge to actions across all curriculum subjects and realizing real benefits for all.
- All school members are self-learners and continuously develop professionally.
- All school members, including students, learn in class and real life. All are exposed to real-life problems in the community and are concerned about the challenges of the society and the ummah. Their teaching and learning activities are considered forms of Allah's worship.
- The effectiveness and quality of education and Tarbiyah offered in the school are judged by the kind of Muslim identity and commitment of students to Islam, their competency and professionalism, and the school's impact on society in the medium and long term.

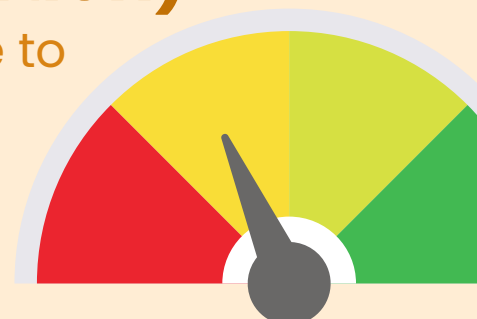


The Concept and Role of **Wasatiyyah (Moderation)** in Educational Landscape to Lessen Digital Stress



Asst. Prof. Dr. Noorlila Ahmad

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In today's rapidly advancing digital world, technology has become deeply integrated into our daily lives. From communication and work to education and social interaction, we rely heavily on digital platforms. This digital shift is particularly evident in education, where technology has transformed how students learn and how teachers teach. However, with this transformation comes a critical challenge: the rise of digital stress.

Digital Stress in Education

Digital stress refers to the mental and physical strain caused by the overwhelming presence of digital technology in everyday educational activities. It manifests both inside and outside the classroom. Accumulated global findings suggest a correlation between the growth of technology and increasing stress levels, which contribute to anxiety, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion (Hussain & Griffiths, 2019). Students, teachers and even parents are most affected by digital stress in education.



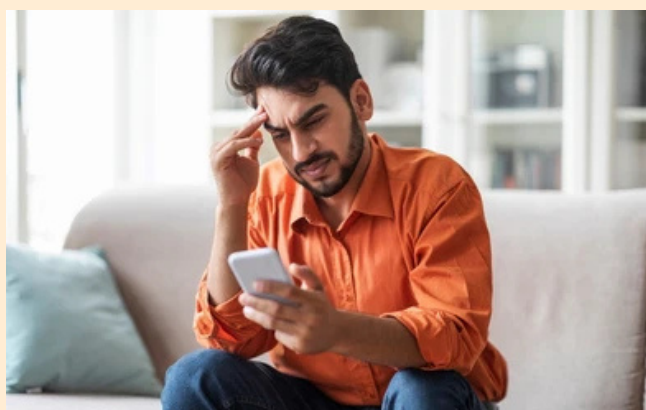
Students, from school to university, often experience digital stress due to the need to master technological skills, managing information through online, meeting the deadlines, navigate online assessments. Handling the distractions of social media add another layer of complexity to their academic responsibilities (Ayyash-Abdo & Sanchez-Ruiz, 2020). For teachers, the rapid evolution of digital tools presents challenges, particularly for those of older generations who may struggle to adapt to new platforms and technologies. These educators are tasked with balancing multiple digital tools while managing their students' needs and their own workloads.



When discussed parents position related to digital stress, it is essential to take part as the role of supporting children's online learning in addition to managing their own responsibilities. Unable to give correct support and motivation led to mental fatigue, burnout and declining in the academic performance and achievement.

The Root Cause's of Digital Stress

Why does digital stress occur in education? Several factors contribute to digital stress in education. One major issue is the constant connectivity that technology demands. Additionally, the blurring of boundaries between school and home life contributes significantly to digital stress. Students often struggle to distinguish these boundaries, as online learning may extend into weekends or irregular hours, creating a constant need to be "on." assignments, emails, and academic content are accessible 24/7, making it difficult to disconnect. For instance, frequently checking assignments, assessments, emails and social media during family dinners, weekends, or late at night is a sign of imbalance.



The consequences become more concerning when individuals prioritize digital interactions over face-to-face relationships or struggle to relax without constantly checking their phones or gadgets. This overdependency on technology not only reduces productivity but also negatively impacts mental and emotional health. Additionally, the serious impact of social media platforms fuels unhealthy comparisons with images of success, beauty, and happiness that lead many to feel inadequate or left behind in their personal or professional lives.

The mental pressure of switching between academic responsibilities and social media interactions also impacts physical well-being, leading to issues such as anxiety, irritability,

sleep disturbances, and physical ailments like headaches and eye strain. If left unchecked, digital stress can take a serious toll on an individual's overall well-being, affecting their productivity, relationships, and quality of life



Another significant impact of digital stress is the human brain's inability to keep pace with the fast-moving digital world. Our cognitive abilities are limited, and the overconsumption of information can lead to cognitive overload. This impairment disrupts decision-making, decreases attention span, and increases mental fatigue, which becomes more frequent due to the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon. As a result, we feel compelled to stay constantly connected to avoid missing important updates or opportunities that sometimes may not be necessary.

Thus, creating awareness to address this modern dilemma through understanding the Islamic concept Wasatiyyah (moderation) provides a valuable framework for managing digital stress while fostering a balanced and fulfilling life for better psychological wellbeing.

Why We Need to Understand the Concept and Role of Wasatiyyah (moderation) and its relations to Digital Stress?

To address this modern challenge, the Islamic concept of Wasatiyyah (moderation) offers a valuable framework for managing digital stress while promoting psychological well-being. The Quran emphasizes balance and moderation in all aspects of life, including in the way we engage with technology.

Balance and moderation is required in the propagation of Islam. Allah said:

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided” Surah Al-Nahl (16 :Ayat 125)

The above ayat will take us to understand the concept of Wasatiyyah (moderation). How this balance and moderation application in digital stress can be viewed through the lens described by Al-Jahani (2012). He pointed out the essential points that it is vital in shaping individual character and offering moral practices that empower individuals to become more adaptive, compatible, and satisfied while interacting with others' values and beliefs. Creating a sense of safety and coexistence; allows a thorough understanding of context in terms of one's surroundings. Thus, it will develop a well-balanced character according to Islamic Sharia, resulting in a balanced religion and daily life. In other words, balance between idealism and realism, and between spiritual and materialistic concerns. The Quran praises Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) for his morals, stating, ‘Indeed, you are of a great moral character’ (Surah Al-Qalam, 68:4). At the end, promote inner happiness, comfort and safety for individuals and stable society.

Promoting the Islamic concept of Wasatiyyah (moderation) can play a crucial role in reducing digital stress. Derived from the Quranic verse, “Thus We have made you a just (moderate) nation...” (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:143). Wasatiyyah (moderation) calls for a balanced and measured approach to life, including our interactions with technology. Islam encourages its followers to adopt a middle path, avoiding extremes in all aspects of life, whether in consumption, behavior or social interaction. This principle can be effectively applied to our digital habits, ensuring that technology remains a tool for -

enhancing our lives rather than a source of stress and imbalance.

In education, this means integrating digital tools from online to blended learning environments in a way that enhances learning without overwhelming students or teachers. However, due to the rapid increase in technology usage and, at times, dependency on it, managing digital engagement can become overwhelming and difficult to control. As a result, students and teachers may be forced to quickly adapt to digital tools without adequate practice or a proper balance in their lives.

Practical Applications of Wasatiyyah (moderation) in Digital Usage

To apply *Wasatiyyah* (moderation) in digital usage, individuals can adopt several practical strategies so as to encourage mindful consumption.

Firstly, setting boundaries where we need to designate specific times for using digital devices by establishing tech-free zones at home, such as during meals or before bedtime. Why is this important? Creating these boundaries helps individuals develop healthier digital habits and ensures a balance between online and offline activities. It fosters more meaningful family interactions and supports better sleep hygiene, contributing to overall well-being.



Secondly, prioritizing quality over quantity -

where instead of endlessly scrolling through various social media platforms, individuals should focus on engaging in meaningful online activities that contribute to personal development or spiritual reflection. For example, selecting content that aligns with one's values or enhances knowledge, rather than consuming information aimlessly, can be more fulfilling. Why is this important? It prevents time-wasting and supports intellectual and emotional growth, in line with the principles of Wasatiyyah (moderation).

Thirdly, to practice mindful consumption where we need to filter out unnecessary or harmful content is essential to avoid cognitive overload and reduce stress. Why filter harmful content? Harmful content, such as negativity, misinformation, or toxic debates, can distort perceptions, lead to mental fatigue, and increase anxiety. Additionally, mindful digital consumption helps individuals stay focused on constructive activities, supporting mental clarity and emotional balance.



Finally, the exercise of digital detox where we need to take occasional breaks from screens through digital detoxes can be highly beneficial. Why take a digital detox? These breaks allow individuals to recharge mentally and emotionally, helping to reduce the overstimulation from constant online engagement. Digital detoxes promote mindfulness and help realign one's focus on offline relationships and personal well-being.

Wasatiyyah's (moderation) Ethical Emphasis

When we look deeper into its meaning and understanding, *Wasatiyyah* (moderation) heavily emphasizes ethics as its core, regulating human behavior to promote well-being, balance in life, tolerance, coexistence, and respect for others (Kanan, 2011). The principles of Wasatiyyah (moderation) can also be aligned with Aqeedah, which refers to an individual's firm belief. This belief is characterized by certainty, without doubt, or suspicion, and promotes moderation through clarity, tolerance, uprightness, and justice.



Digital tools are essential for modern education. However, overuse can lead to significant stress. As prevention, the Islamic principle of Wasatiyyah (moderation) offers a timeless solution and valuable framework for managing digital engagement in education. By balancing online activities with offline moments, setting boundaries and practicing mindful digital consumption to alert students and educators in managing digital stress. Promoting Wasatiyyah (moderation) in school play a significant role in nurturing morals and values to avoid digital stress.

Setting a mindset that prioritizes proper and correct behavior, while rejecting extremes of material dependency and negative technology usage, fosters a healthier lifestyle and a more productive learning environment. Immersive Wasatiyyah (moderation) provides a path toward harmony and well-being in education as digital connectivity constantly increases.

Islamic Mission between Text and Context: Prophet (PBUH) as a role model



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Islam is a universal religion. Its guidelines are always relevant and in all places. However, this article focuses on the criticism that Muslims have been the cause of misunderstanding and criticism of Islam at all times and in all circumstances. This is why Sheikh Al-Ghazali states: *"Islam is an innocent subject that has been misused by unprofessional advocates"*

Whether it is the Arab world today, or the Muslim-majority or minority countries, the point for all to think about is to understand and present Islam based on the text and context in the most accurate way possible.



It should be noted that the contemporary Islamic world has not fully understood this since the Islamic world has been in power and a superior mentality throughout history. Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi refers to this as 'Fiqh al-Nas' and 'Fiqh al-Waqi'. In the contemporary Islamic intellectual tradition, textual -

knowledge is insufficient for those studying the field. On the other hand, many who have worked in the field and understood the context do not have sufficient knowledge of Sharia. Only someone who properly studied these two areas can present Islam as a guide suitable for all times and circumstances. Some Muslims do not understand correctly that Islam is being falsified or put in a criminal cell today.



Therefore, it is necessary to examine the life history of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who correctly understood and practiced Islam based on text and context and left behind good examples. Even though he lived as a minority and was powerless in the Mekkah atmosphere, he gained power in Medina and ruled over various ethnic and religious groups justly. This is because he understood Islam and the context of that time very well. He never undertook any work that would cause trouble for Islam or Muslims.

For example, during the Mekka period, when Muslims were oppressed and tortured by the Quraysh authorities, he did not retaliate. He remained patient and worked in harmony with the context of the time. Muslims were few and weak in physical strength. In this situation, even though he was a truthful person, -

opposing the enemies was not only dangerous but also unwise. This is derived from contextual knowledge. At the same time, the Prophet (PBUH) did not use this situation as an excuse to be inactive and use his weakness as an excuse. He sought a solution and identified Abyssinia as a suitable refuge, subsequently sending a few companions there. Additionally, he tried to find a safe place at Taif. Finally, the land of Medina gave shelter to the Muslims.

When the Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims settled in Medina and assumed the throne, they understood the context of Medina very carefully and worked accordingly. They approached people of all ethnicities and religions and presented exemplary guidance. They did not do injustice to any Muslim or non-Muslim living in the land of Medina, and they did not allow anyone to do injustice to the State of Medina. They worked with a perfect understanding of the environment of that time. Here, just as context and text have gained importance in the activities of the Prophet (PBUH), it is possible to observe the Priorities, Percentage Analysis, Future Perspective, and other things included in it. The Hudaibiyah Treaty is a good example of this.



The Prophet (PBUH) dreams of circumambulating the Kaaba. Since the dreams of the Prophets (PHUH) are revelations, he understands the text very carefully. It needs to be interpreted very well.

The verse about 'Jihad' is a good example of this. After understanding the situation of the Muslims in Medina and the context of the Arabian Peninsula, the Prophet (PBUH) now sets out to perform 'Umrah' with his companions. This is an understanding of the context. In the context understood here, various things can take priority. Some priorities may have to be postponed or rushed according to the contextual situations. The level of importance to be given to the priority task that is selected and worked on. This is indicated by the way the Prophet (PBUH) behaved when the Quraysh unexpectedly tried to stop the companions who were set out for the holy journey. Although the holy Umrah journey was a priority task based on the text and understanding the context, the Prophet (PBUH) agreed to compromise when the enemies came to stop him. The Prophet (PBUH) could have completed the Umrah mission against the enemies. However, he gave the importance to the holy journey as much as he should have. Then, with foresight and keeping the consequences in mind, he agreed to compromise negotiations. He also achieved the expected success at the end of the journey.

This is why scholars refer to Sirah as the practical application of Islam during the Prophet's (PBUH) time. It represents a practice rooted in a correct understanding of both the Islamic text and the context of that era. The life of the Prophet (PBUH) serves as an exemplary guide for us. Today, we need scholars who possess a deep understanding of both the text and the context to ensure that Islam continues to be a guide suitable for all times. Conversely, scholars who rigidly adhere to the literal meaning of the text without considering context risk failing to make Islam relevant for all times. Such individuals, despite their intentions, end up betraying the essence of the religion. This aligns with the saying, 'Islam is an innocent subject that has been misused by unprofessional advocates.'

Financial Literacy Among Muslim Populations: Key to Economic Empowerment and Growth



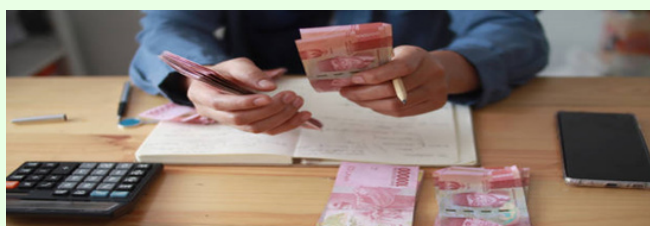
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Introduction

Financial literacy, the understanding of financial concepts, and the ability to make informed financial decisions play a vital role in the economic empowerment and growth of populations worldwide. In Muslim-majority countries, as well as in Muslim communities within non-Muslim countries, financial literacy is often lower than average, posing a challenge to economic growth. The situation is compounded by the fact that as Muslims we seek to adhere to Sharia principles, which prohibit interest (riba), encourage risk-sharing, and promote ethical investments. This is because Allah prohibited interest (riba) in many verses of the holy Quran including the following: *O you who believe, fear Allah and give up what remains of riba if you are believers [Al-Baqarah 2: 278]*. From Abu Hurayrah: The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said: "*Riba has seventy segments, the least serious being equivalent to a man committing adultery with his own mother.*" [Ibn Majah]. The lack of knowledge about Islamic financial products and how to use them effectively often leads to financial exclusion, especially for women, youth, and rural Muslim populations.



The Importance of Financial Literacy in Economic Empowerment

Financial literacy encompasses a range of skills and knowledge that enable individuals to manage personal finances effectively, including budgeting, savings, investing, understanding credit, and knowing one's rights and responsibilities as a financial consumer. A financially literate person can make informed decisions about money, plan for the future and navigate the financial systems successfully.



In the context of Muslim communities, financial literacy also involves understanding the principles of Islamic finance, such as interest – free banking, halal investments, and the mechanisms of zakat (charitable giving) and waqf (endowments). For these Muslim populations, financial literacy means being able to participate in both conventional and Islamic

financial systems without compromising religious beliefs.

Financial literacy contributes to economic empowerment by giving individuals the confidence to engage with financial institutions, invest in their futures, and manage their money more effectively. For Muslim populations in developing countries, improved financial literacy can help reduce poverty, increase income generation, and lead to greater economic participation.

Financial literacy increases an individual's ability to access and use financial products, such as savings accounts, loans, and insurance, and to avoid risky behaviors like high-interest debt. In Muslim communities, financial literacy enables better participation in Islamic financial systems, fostering economic inclusion. By understanding Sharia-compliant banking options, such as profit-sharing accounts (*mudarabah*), leasing (*ijarah*), and joint venture partnerships (*musharakah*), Muslims can make informed decisions that align with their faith while contributing to economic growth.

Challenges to Financial Literacy in Muslim Communities

- **Low Levels of Education and Financial Inclusion**

In many Muslim majority countries, particularly those in Africa and South Asia, general education levels are low, particularly among women and rural populations. Financial literacy is closely tied to formal education, and those with less access to schooling are less likely to be financially literate. In rural areas, the distance from financial institutions further compounds the problem, as people may have limited opportunities to interact with banks or other financial services.

- **Cultural and Religious Barriers**

Cultural attitudes towards gender roles, -

money management, and work also hinder financial literacy in many Muslim communities. For example, in conservative areas, women may face restrictions on their mobility, which limits their access to financial education programs and services. Additionally, some communities hold mistrust towards financial institutions, particularly conventional banks that charge interest, which is prohibited in Islam.

- **Lack of Awareness and Availability of Islamic Financial Products**

Another significant barrier is the limited awareness of Islamic financial products. Even in Muslim majority countries, many individuals are unaware of the availability of Sharia-compliant banking options, or they may not fully understand how these products work. Islamic finance is still a developing field, and many institutions do not offer comprehensive services that cater to the needs of the Muslim population. This knowledge gap prevents Muslims from taking full advantage of financial opportunities in ways that align with their religious beliefs.



Solutions for Enhancing Financial Literacy in Muslim Communities

- **Educational Reforms and Community-Based Programs**

Governments should prioritize financial literacy as part of their national education -

curricula. Basic financial concepts, along with an introduction to Islamic finance, should be taught in schools from an early age. Adult education programs, particularly those targeting women and rural populations, can also help improve financial literacy rates. These programs could be delivered through community centers, religious institutions, or NGOs, leveraging existing social structures to maximize participation.



● Leveraging Technology for Financial Education

Mobile technology offers a powerful tool for delivering financial education in Muslim communities, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Mobile banking apps, online courses, and financial literacy platforms can make it easier for people to learn about both conventional and Islamic finance, even if they have limited access to physical financial institutions.



● Islamic Financial Literacy Campaigns

To promote awareness and understanding

of Islamic financial products, targeted campaigns should be developed to educate Muslim populations. These campaigns can be implemented through mass media, religious institutions, and community-based workshops, explaining the benefits and mechanisms of Islamic banking, investment, and charitable giving. Religious leaders, who hold significant influence in many Muslim communities, can play a crucial role in advocating for financial literacy and ethical financial practices.

● Women's Financial Empowerment Programs

Given the unique challenges faced by women in Muslim communities, gender-specific financial literacy programs are essential. These programs should focus on increasing women's access to financial services, teaching them about personal finance management, and promoting entrepreneurship.



Conclusion

Financial literacy is a key driver of economic empowerment and growth for Muslim populations in developing countries. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to manage their finances within the framework of their Islamic beliefs, financial literacy promotes economic inclusion, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. Overcoming the challenges to financial literacy requires a collaborative effort from governments, financial institutions, and religious organizations to provide accessible, culturally relevant financial education.

Importance of Zakat for Community Development in Malaysia



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Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam, and it is compulsory to pay zakat annually by Muslims. In Malaysia, where Islam is the dominant religion, zakat serves as a crucial tool for poverty alleviation, wealth redistribution, and socio-economic stability. This puts a question on whether zakat is important for community development and, if so, how significant it may be. To better understand the system of zakat it is crucial to look at the economy of the region, mainly focusing on the market model of the economy. In Malaysia, zakat is crucial to meet certain needs and obligations. Many students from lower backgrounds studying in higher level institutions are fully sponsored by zakat. Education would have been unlikely for these students if zakat ceased to exist. As mentioned by (Arshad 2024) at the 15th International Conference on Islamic Economics & Finance (ICIEF):

“The novelty of the model lies in the incorporation of the third-sector economy, where charity (zakat and voluntary charity) is instrumental in empowering society to meet its needs”.

Zakat is very important. Many people from needy families heavily depend on zakat to meet their necessities which may include education, healthcare, food, clothes, housing, and more. Zakat in Malaysia is mostly generated by citizens willing to contribute -

towards the sustainability of the nation. The funds are allocated to support diverse programs aimed at uplifting underprivileged communities. This writeup discusses the importance of zakat in three sectors, Poverty alleviation, education and healthcare.



Zakat and Poverty Alleviation

To understand the link between zakat and poverty, it is fundamental to acknowledge what poverty is. According to Zulkifli et al. (2021), Poverty is often referred to as a phenomenon of scarcity, inadequacy or instability of income. Poverty is an issue that many nations have to face, meanwhile zakat could be a permanent solution to the issue if implemented correctly. As mentioned by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ):

"Allah has made zakat obligatory so that it may purify your remaining wealth and be given to the poor among you." (Sunan Abu Dawood, 1573)

The hadith also mentions the purification of wealth, this refers to the wealth you have left after you have paid zakat, meaning that your wealth will have more blessings (barakah) after contributing to the impoverished. Zulkifli et al. (2021) also stressed that poverty can also cause health issues, and exacerbate social problems, leading to isolation, discrimination, and loss of a bright future. This further identifies that poverty is a big problem that requires more attention. Zakat is a perfect solution to such concerns, as it can eradicate poverty and improve the overall quality of life for the underprivileged. Proper management of zakat institutions is seen as a powerful mechanism to facilitate community development and strengthen the Muslim economy.

Zakat and Education

Education is very influential at the moment. The way a person overcomes his hardships and difficult moments as a student will develop his character at an adult stage. According to some people from low income backgrounds, education is just a waste of resources and their focus should be on earning right after school. Is education really important? Should people from lower income backgrounds endeavour higher education? If so, what are the means that might be used to attain that objective?

As mentioned by Katharine M. Broton in her PhD dissertation, the attainment of a college credential is associated with higher wages, better work conditions, and increased health, happiness, and civic participation. Statistically, university graduates tend to earn more than those with only a high school diploma. This difference in earnings is often referred to as the "college wage premium." Over a lifetime, university graduates generally earn significantly more. For instance, in the U.S., studies estimate that individuals with a bachelor's degree earn about \$1 million more in lifetime earnings than those with only a high school diploma. Educated people earn more -

than those who prefer not to pursue further studies. To enable needy students to pursue university education, the government of Malaysia encourages citizens to pay Zakat, particularly to support educational expenses for those in need.

Zakat in Malaysia is known to give financial and non-financial assistance to those in need, as well as, providing full scholarships to students that cannot afford to pay for their own education. According to Nurul Balqis binti Mohd Sood (zakat scholarship recipient in Malaysia Selangor), zakat helped her from the age of 12 by providing necessities such as food, clothes, books, maintenance and fees. This assistance is categorised as asnaf. Sr. Balqis's mother is a single parent with nine children. As a result, assistance from Zakat has been crucial in helping her family overcome numerous hardships. Overall, Sr. Balqis is satisfied with and deeply grateful for the support provided by Zakat in Malaysia. When asked about any negative experiences about zakat management by officials disbursing it, Sr. Balqis claims the timing could be improved, sometimes they receive late. The interviewee (Sr. Balqis) is currently an IIUM student pursuing her bachelors in Islamic Finance, she is the first in her family of 9 to strive for education.

Zakat has the means and ability to save thousands of lives from financial and mental exhaustion. Therefore, contribution towards zakat and regular donation service is very much encouraged in Islam.

As mentioned in the holy Quran:

حُذِّ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

(Surah At-Tawbah, 9:103)

This verse highlights the importance of giving zakat as a means of purification and spiritual growth, while also bringing blessings and reassurance to the giver. It emphasizes that acts

of charity are heard and valued by Allah.

Zakat and Healthcare

Healthcare is really important, but at the same time very expensive. Many small companies with small operations do not give out healthcare insurance to staff. These workers mainly come from low income backgrounds. In case of emergencies the employees will have to find different ways to finance a basic need for healthcare. This could result in bank loans, borrowings from relatives or friends completely exhausting their financial status, leaving them with a lot of debt and low income, making them vulnerable. Due to healthcare being so expensive many individuals refuse health assistance in times of need, which may deteriorate the situation. Thankfully, several zakat institutions partner with hospitals to subsidize treatments for patients from low-income groups in Malaysia.



The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) mentioned in a hadith:

"Cure the sick among you by giving charity."
(Hadith - Sahih)

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, It is very important to preserve your body as Muslims, Provisions of body (al-fada'il al-jismiyyah) ' - Good health is one aspect of success in this life. Even with an enormous amount of wealth,

that would be nothing if you were sick or depressed. The followers of Islam are encouraged to keep themselves fit and healthy. To ensure the body is healthy physically and spiritually, Muslims must eat good and halal food, as well as exercise regularly. According to many scholars, good health will always come first, to achieve complete satisfaction from Allah SWT Muslim individuals should always take any health concerns seriously. Zakat is a great initiative to help fund those who are sick and need urgent assistance.

Conclusion

Zakat plays a significant role in Malaysia, as it helps positively sustain the community. Zakat, which means "purification" and "growth," requires eligible Muslims to allocate 2.5% of their wealth to specific categories of beneficiaries, including the poor, the needy, and those in debt (Surah At-Tawbah, 9:60). Zakat is a system that helps diminish the rise of poverty, provide a platform for students to pursue their education, and also provide healthcare initiatives to help keep the population healthy. All three sectors mentioned are very important to keep a sustainable economy, which could prove to be a catalyst for further development in Malaysia and beyond.

Exploring Cambodia's Path to Progress:

A Visit to the Inauguration of the Cambodian University of Technology and Management



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My recent visit to Cambodia was marked by the momentous inauguration of the Cambodian University of Technology and Management (CUMT), the first Muslim university in the country officially recognized by the government. This noteworthy event was graced by the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, the High Representative of Prime Minister Samdech Thipadei Hun Manet, marking the formal opening of the university after two years of provisional operation. This milestone underscores Cambodia's progress in fostering inclusivity through education.

The Significance of CUMT

The establishment of the Cambodian University of Technology and Management (CUMT) is a landmark achievement for the Cambodian Muslim community, a group that has historically faced significant barriers to accessing higher education. This groundbreaking institution aspires to provide a comprehensive educational framework that not only caters to the unique needs of Muslim students but also embraces the broader Cambodian populace. CUMT integrates Islamic and secular curricula, prepares scholars for modern challenges while remaining rooted in their faith.

CUMT's emphasis on critical disciplines such as technology, management, and sciences is designed to furnish students with the -



indispensable skills and knowledge required to flourish in an ever more competitive global environment. Officially recognized by the Cambodian government, CUMT embodies a transformative advancement aimed at empowering Muslim students and fostering educational equity across the nation. By cultivating an environment that is both supportive and respectful of Islamic values and traditions, the university nurtures an atmosphere conducive to academic excellence and holistic personal development.

CUMT encourages students to harness their education for community betterment. The university's commitment to inclusivity and excellence serves as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path for future generations of learners.



Insights into the Muslim Community in Cambodia

The Muslim community in Cambodia, primarily consisting of the Cham ethnic group, is an integral part of the nation's cultural tapestry. The Cham people, descendants of the ancient Champa kingdom, preserve their traditions, language, and Islamic practices. Despite being a minority group in a predominantly Buddhist country, Cambodian Muslims have maintained their cultural identity and actively contribute to the nation's social fabric.

They are committed to education, community service, and interfaith dialogue, playing a vital role in a diverse society. I was deeply moved by the resilience and optimism of the Cambodian Muslim community. Despite challenges under the Khmer Rouge, they have rebuilt their lives and continue to thrive.

Personal Experience in Cambodia

I had the opportunity to meet various members of the Cambodian Muslim community, who welcomed me with open arms. Their hospitality shone through as we shared meals and discussed aspirations. I was particularly moved by their stories of perseverance and hope, which demonstrated a profound sense of community and belonging.

I delivered presentations on education, inspired by students' eagerness to learn. Their inquisitive nature and commitment to personal and professional growth left a lasting impression on me.



I relished dishes such as fragrant biryani and succulent kebabs, each meal not merely a feast for the palate but also an opportunity to forge connections with new friends. These culinary delights served as a testament to the cultural richness and culinary diversity that defines Cambodia, showcasing the harmonious blending of traditions and influences that characterize its gastronomy.

I also had the privilege of participating in various community events that underscored the vital role of education and the spirit of unity among different religious groups. Through engaging discussions and shared experiences, it became evident that education transcends boundaries, acting as a bridge that connects individuals from different backgrounds and beliefs.

As Cambodia continues to embrace educational initiatives like CUMT, the future looks promising for the Muslim community and the nation as a whole.

Observations on Cambodia's Strategic Achievements in Politics, Education, and Economy

My visit to Cambodia provided me with a unique opportunity to witness the nation's impressive strides in various sectors, particularly politics, education, and economy. Through my observations, I was able to draw parallels between Cambodia and other nations such as Mauritius and Malaysia, both of which have also navigated their unique paths toward development.



Political Landscape

Cambodia's centralized governance under Prime Minister Hun Sen has facilitated two decades of stability, critical for economic growth. The government's focus on attracting foreign investment and fostering trade has played a significant role in creating an environment conducive to growth.

One notable aspect of Cambodia's political strategy is its commitment to maintaining its peace and security. Cambodia's centralized governance has provided two decades of stability, fostering economic growth, much like Malaysia's focus on inclusivity and Mauritius' emphasis on democratic pluralism.

Educational Advancements

Education is a pivotal pillar of Cambodia's strategic achievements, particularly with the establishment of institutions such as the CUMT. The Cambodian government recognizes that education is key to unlocking potential and fostering human capital development. Efforts have been made to enhance the quality of education, particularly in higher learning, with a focus on integrating Islamic and secular curricula. This holistic approach aims to equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in a globalized world while instilling a strong sense of identity and community.

The government prioritizes vocational and technical training to meet economic demands. This approach resonates with educational policies in Malaysia, where the government has invested heavily in higher education and research, recognizing the vital role of education in fostering innovation and economic growth.

Mauritius, too, has made significant strides in education, with a strong focus on universal primary education and access to secondary and tertiary education. The country has successfully created a knowledge-based economy, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and skill development. Although Cambodia has a similar trajectory, it faces the challenge of addressing the quality and relevance of education to ensure that graduates are equipped to meet the demands of the job market.

Economic Development

Economically, Cambodia has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies in Southeast Asia, focusing on sectors such as tourism, garment manufacturing, and agriculture. Policies to attract foreign investment have yielded positive results. Cambodia's location and investment policies position it as a regional business hub.

The government's focus on improving transportation networks such as roads and bridges underscores its commitment to facilitating trade and investment.

Cambodia's policies mirror Malaysia's diversification and Mauritius' strategic business environment, highlighting shared goals of fostering entrepreneurship and innovation.

Conclusion

My visit to Cambodia and the inauguration of the CUMT have deepened my understanding of the intricate interplay between education, community empowerment, and cultural identity. The establishment of the CUMT represents a significant step toward educational equity and inclusivity in the Cambodian Muslim community. Cambodia's strategic achievements inspire optimism for its future. I look forward to witnessing the continued growth of the CUMT and its impact on the Cambodian Muslim community and nation as a whole.

The Interplay of Intellectual and Social Currents in the Middle East and North African (MENA) Region:

A Critical Reflection



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This article examines the influence of Western ideas on Arab thinkers and societies, drawing on Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1798-1939) to explore key themes of intellectual currents and Arab responses. Hourani's (1983) analysis highlights the lasting impact of intellectual currents on MENA societies, emphasizing how the region's intellectuals, within his chosen timeframe, continually engaged with the challenges of Western modernity and colonialism. He categorized these responses into four generations, which he elaborated as follows:

Historiographical Overview of Social Thoughts

The First Phase (1830–1870) featured officials and writers like Tahtawi, Khayr al-Din, and Bustani, who viewed Europe's industrial, political, and communication advancements not as a threat, but as a model to follow. They aimed to convince readers in the traditional world that adopting foreign institutions and laws could align with their identity.

The Second Generation (1870 to 1900) involved those who faced a situation which had changed in some important ways, compared to the first generation. Particularly, it was the time when Europe had become both “adversary” and “model” as they had great influence on the political and educational landscape of the regions. In Hourani's opinion, “the main task of thinkers in this generation was to reinterpret Islam so as to make it compatible with living in

the modern world, and even a source of strength in it.” Hourani takes Muhammad 'Abduh to be the most representative of this phase.

In The Third Period (1900 to 1939), there emerged two ‘intellectual camps,’ according to Hourani, representing “two strands of thought which 'Abduh and others had tried to hold together.” In his seemingly useful classification, Hourani identified (a) “those who stood fast on the Islamic bases of society,” which he claimed as group moving “closer to a kind of Muslim fundamentalism;” and in contrast to (b) “those who continued to accept Islam as a body of principles but held that life in society should be regulated by secular norms.” Hourani notes that Taha Husayn valued preserving the Islamic past but felt the need to embrace modern culture, particularly as it emerged in Western Europe.

The Fourth Phase (roughly began with the Second World War), marking the beginning of the end of European dominance in the region culminating into total loss of its grip on the region at end of the war. This was marked by a change in the scale of political life as there was a broader field of political action with a larger public for ideas and rhetoric due to “the spread of education, the growth of cities and industry, and the use of the new mass media” Hourani seems to take 'Abd al- Nasir as the representative figure of this period.

A Review of Hourani's Submissions

Hourani's "four-phases generation frame" offers a valuable perspective on how MENA intellectuals and societies have responded to encounters with Western thought and

"development." Influential figures like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh sought to revitalize Islamic thought and advocate for social reform, leaving a lasting impact. However, Reid (1982) critiqued Hourani for focusing on less sophisticated scholars, noting that many of his subjects were not world-class thinkers but practical leaders—religious figures, journalists, teachers, politicians, and administrators—who adapted Western ideas to address their societies' pressing challenges.

The contemporary MENA context therefore presents a more complex and nuanced picture. While the region's intellectuals continue to grapple with issues of identity, modernity, and political Islam, the globalized world has introduced new challenges and opportunities. The very notable one is that the rise of social media and digital technologies has transformed the way ideas are disseminated and debated. Overall, Hourani's work provides a valuable foundation for understanding the intellectual history of the MENA.

Western Influence and Arab Response: A Contemporary Perspective

Hourani's work highlights the enduring historical interplay between Western ideas and Arab socio-economic and political development. The influence of Western ideas on MENA politics and socioeconomics has been a consistent theme throughout the region's history.

As MENA countries engage with the global economy, adopting Western economic models and institutions has driven significant social and cultural change. The dominance of Western media, technology, and consumer culture has introduced alternative lifestyles and worldviews, challenging traditional norms and values and fueling debates on identity, modernity, and religion's role in public life.

Many MENA intellectuals are seeking to reconcile Islamic tradition with modern -

thought, exploring indigenous intellectual traditions and developing innovative interpretations of Islamic texts.

For example, the rise of Islamic revivalist movements has led to a renewed interest in classical Islamic thought. Scholars and intellectuals are re-examining the works of medieval Muslim philosophers, theologians, and scientists, seeking to extract timeless wisdom and apply it to contemporary challenges.

MENA societies face the challenge of balancing tradition and modernity in the 21st century. While some Arab intellectuals advocate reconciling Islamic values with modernity, others firmly oppose such efforts.

Al-Salimi (2024) said:

"Tradition and heritage have become a battleground between those who call for its 'renewal', its 'revitalisation', its 'revival', its 'winnowing' and its 'abandonment'? Today, the strand that champions a 'revival of the heritage is represented by what one might call the 'neo-traditionalists' – a significant group of Arab thinkers who seek a return to their heritage and tradition. Yet, their opponents aim to abandon tradition altogether. Each of the two groups actually comprises several subsidiary strands rather than consisting of a single school of thought"

Concluding

Western influence on Arab thought is complex, marked by the interplay between tradition, modernity, and the dialogue between Islam and the West. As Western ideas shape the MENA region's intellectual, socio-economic, and political landscapes, Arab thinkers have offered diverse and sometimes conflicting responses. Timely research is crucial to understanding these evolving dynamics and countering the prevailing influence of Western ideologies. IIIT scholars are uniquely positioned to bridge this gap through research-based studies addressing these challenges in the Muslim world.



Healing Hearts with Faith: An Islamic Approach to Counseling Practice



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"Nobody cares for me."

*"No matter how much I prayed, made
dua, and tried to do good deeds, Allah
still tested me."*

These two quotes mentioned above reflect how frustrated a client is when they begin to share their feeling of hopelessness going through one trial after another. The client is depressed, experiencing frustration, feeling lonely, and giving up. Counsellors often encounter these scenarios when clients exhaust themselves after attempting to persevere. They thought they were strong but lost hope to keep trying and would like to give up; so, they didn't do anything. At this point, the counsellor should know these moments indicate the client's lowest moment, whereby the coping skills they have used are no longer working to cope with their current issues.

The coping strategies might have been working previously, but not this time; perhaps the issues are different and require more effort and other strategies to deal with them. However, a counsellor with wisdom should not only address the issues on a surface level. It can be beneficial to delve deeper into the underlying issues, especially those related to spiritual aspects, as this can provide the client with a fresh perspective on life's challenges and hardships.

Many times I encountered clients throughout my counselling practices disclosing how frustrated and regretful they are in themselves.

For Muslim clients, I have realised that they not only seek support and alternative ways to manage their issues but also search for inner peace that can soothe their hearts and minds. The counsellor's toughest job is to instill in the client the understanding that they should solely rely on Allah s.w.t. to regain their spiritual strength. Hope, trust, and confidence are essential elements for clients to bounce back from difficulties in life. Implementing westernised theories and techniques can always be easy at first, but the change does not last long.

Counsellors can benefit from incorporating an Islamic approach into their practice, provided they approach it with care and professionalism. Counselors need to avoid portraying ourselves as preachers, since this does not align with the nature of a therapeutic relationship. We should introduce spiritual elements in a subtle and wise manner. To ensure that counsellors can deliver an Islamic-based approach into the practice, they have to start with empathy. No labelling, no preconceived ideas about the client and their issues. Try to understand their hardship from their shoes; this is the key to a successful counselling experience. Without empathy, plus being judgmental, therapeutic relationships cannot be established, thus limiting the opportunities to utilise Islamic approaches with clients.

After all, I personally believe that the journey to integrate an Islamic approach in helping others should be for all occasions, not restricted only within counselling practices. By embracing this approach in every aspect of life, it helps to grow our spiritual consciousness and maturity and eventually enhance our professional identity.

China's First Mosque:

HUAISHENG MOSQUE IN GUANGZHOU



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Introduction to Huaisheng Mosque



The Huaisheng Mosque, located in Guangzhou, is a remarkable historical and architectural gem and one of the earliest Islamic monuments in China. With over 1,350 years of history, it stands as a testament to the enduring cultural exchange between the Arab world and China through the Maritime Silk Road.

Its iconic Guangta (Light Tower), traditional Tang Dynasty courtyard layout, and harmonious blend of Islamic and Chinese architectural elements make it a significant site of heritage and spirituality.

The Huaisheng Mosque, located at 56 Guangta Road, Yileli Community, Guangta Street, Yuexiu District, Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province, is one of China's oldest Islamic monuments. Spanning 2,966 square meters, the mosque is a symbol of the profound cultural and religious connections established between China and the Islamic world through the Maritime Silk Road.

*huaisheng mosque and guangta minaret 1860*

Historical Roots and Construction

During the Wude period of Emperor Gaozu of Tang (618–626), the "Seal of the Prophets," Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, dispatched four of his disciples to China to spread Islam. Among them, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (known in ancient Chinese texts as Abi Wan Gesu) arrived in Guangzhou via the Maritime Silk Road during the early Zhenguan era. In 627 CE, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, together with the Arab Muslim community residing in Guangzhou, financed the construction of this mosque. It was named "Huaisheng" (meaning "Remembering the Sage") to honor the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Although the mosque was destroyed by fire during the Yuan Dynasty (1343 CE), it was -

rebuilt seven years later. Its current structure largely reflects a major reconstruction from the reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty in 1695. The mosque has undergone three additional renovations since 1949, preserving its historical and architectural significance.



Architectural Highlights

The Guangta (Light Tower)

The mosque's most iconic structure, the Guangta, is a 36.3-meter-high cylindrical tower constructed from green bricks. The Guangta, originally known as the "Call-to-Prayer Tower" (Hu Li Ta), was called "Punker Tower" in Persian. The tower was likely built for four main purposes:

1. **A beacon for ships** – It served as a guiding light for maritime navigation.
2. **Wind direction indicator** – Helping sailors determine wind patterns.
3. **A call for prayer** – Muslims would climb to the top to call others to worship.
4. **Symbol of Islamic power** – To inspire reverence and respect for Islam.

The tower's unique design, featuring small rectangular openings and twin spiral staircases, is a masterpiece of Tang-era architecture.

Designated as a National Key Historical Relic in 1996, the Guangta is not only the oldest -

surviving high-rise structure in China from the Tang Dynasty but also the world's oldest mosque "Bunker Tower."

The Mosque's Layout

The mosque features a traditional Tang Dynasty courtyard-style layout with an axis-symmetric design. Key structures along the main axis include:

1. **Main Gate:** Built with red bricks and green glazed tile eaves.
2. **Second Gate:** Constructed in the Lingnan architectural style, adorned with a gilded inscription of "Huaisheng Mosque" by Qing official Deng Tingnan.
3. **Third Gate**
4. **Moon-Watching Tower (Kan Yue Lou)**
5. **Prayer Hall**
6. **Scripture Hall**

The Guangta is situated in the mosque's southwestern corner, surrounded by stele pavilions and corridors.

Cultural and Historical Significance

● Islamic Inscription on the Roof

The mosque's Chinese-style roof is engraved with Islamic scripture, symbolizing the harmonious integration of Islamic and Chinese cultural elements. This engraving emphasizes the religious and spiritual essence of the mosque, while its structural design respects the local architectural traditions.

● Imperial Recognition

The Huaisheng Mosque holds the distinction of being recognized by the Qing Dynasty Emperor Guangxu. Above the entrance to the Prayer Hall is a plaque inscribed with the phrase "教崇西域" (Jiao Chong Xi Yu), which translates to "Revering the religion of the Western Regions."



The combination of traditional Chinese and Islamic designs, along with imperial recognition, positions the Huaisheng Mosque as a testament to the enduring legacy of cultural and religious exchange in China.

- **lJiao:** Refers to religion, specifically Islam in this context.
- **lChong:** Means to revere or respect.
- **Xi Yu:** An ancient Chinese term for regions west of Xinjiang, broadly referring to areas along the Silk Road, including Central Asia and the Arab world, from which Islam was introduced to China.

The entire phrase expresses respect and reverence for the religion (Islam) originating from the Western Regions. This was an imperial plaque granted by Emperor Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty to the Huaisheng Mosque, recognizing the contributions of Islam to Chinese culture and reflecting the government's inclusivity and respect toward the religion at the time.

Geographical and Maritime Importance

Initially located on the north bank of the Zhujiang River, the mosque's Guangta was used as a landmark for navigation. Over centuries, geographical changes have moved the riverbank several kilometers away, but -

Guangta remains a historical witness to these transformations.



A Center for Faith and Cultural Exchange

For over 1,350 years, the Huaisheng Mosque has been a spiritual center for Muslims in Guangzhou. During the Tang and Song dynasties, Guangzhou flourished as a major port city with a thriving community of Arab merchants. These traders not only fostered commerce but also established cultural and religious ties, reflected in the construction of this grand mosque.

The mosque's architecture, with its harmonious integration of Chinese and Islamic elements, symbolizes centuries of cultural exchange. Its inscriptions, such as those found under the beams of the main hall, document its reconstruction efforts across dynasties, underscoring its resilience and historical importance.

Today, the Huaisheng Mosque stands as a testament to the diversity and inclusivity that characterized Guangzhou even during ancient times. The city's role as an international metropolis continues to thrive, with the mosque serving as a living reminder of the deep connections between Islam and Chinese culture.

Visitors to the mosque can witness its serene atmosphere, admire its intricate designs, and reflect on the enduring legacy of cultural and religious harmony it represents.



Get to Know **IIIT**:

Objectives and its **Focus** at **IIUM**

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) is a globally recognized academic organization dedicated to the revival and promotion of Islamic scholarship. Founded in 1981, IIIT aims to advance education, research, and intellectual discourse rooted in Islamic values and principles. The institute focuses on integrating Islamic thought with contemporary knowledge, offering support to scholars and students through research opportunities, publications, and scholarships. By fostering a deeper understanding of Islam in the modern world, IIIT plays a vital role in the development of Islamic education and intellectual growth across diverse fields. The institute offers scholarships to Muslim youth male and female across the globe.

Organizational Structure of the IIIT Students' Office



Prof. Dr. Dawood Abdulmalek Yahya Al-Hidabi
IIIT Scholarship Coordinator & Advisor



Br. Abdullah Bazyad
IIIT Students
Financial Officer



Br. Bishrul Rifath
IIIT Programs Officer



Sr. Norrohani Binti Azizi
Personal Assistant



Br Sherrif Abu-Bakar Kais
IIIT Alumni &
Magazine Officer

Vision

Thriving societies in which individuals have the opportunity to pursue and realize their fullest potential through transformative learning, social development, and personal growth.

Mission

To conduct and disseminate educational research to empower Muslim Societies with data-driven recommendations for transformative education policy and practice.

The primary objectives are:

Islamization of Knowledge

IIIT aims to integrate Islamic principles and values with contemporary knowledge in various fields such as social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. This objective seeks to develop a knowledge framework that is rooted in Islamic epistemology.

Promoting Islamic Scholarship

The institute supports the development of Islamic scholarship by publishing research, organizing seminars and conferences, and collaborating with universities and academic institutions globally.

Reform of Islamic Thought

IIIT is committed to the reform of Islamic thought, ensuring that Islamic teachings are interpreted and applied in ways that are relevant to contemporary issues.

Education and Curriculum Development

The institute focuses on developing educational curricula that are aligned with Islamic values and promoting educational reforms that integrate Islamic teachings.

Research and Publications

IIIT invests heavily in research and publication efforts, producing books, journals, and papers that address key issues in the Muslim world from an Islamic perspective.

IIIT's Focus at IIUM:

At the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), IIIT's focus includes:

Collaboration on Academic Programs

IIIT collaborates with IIUM in developing academic programs and curricula that integrate Islamic perspectives with modern disciplines, particularly in social sciences, humanities, and Law.

Research Support

IIIT provides support for research projects at IIUM that align with its objectives, particularly those focusing on the Islamization of Knowledge and the reform of Islamic thought.

Student and Faculty Development

The institute often conducts workshops, seminars, and training programs aimed at enhancing the intellectual and academic capabilities of IIUM students and faculty members. This include weekly training programs for IIIT sponsored students to revitalize their knowledge.

Promotion of Islamic Values

IIIT works closely with IIUM to promote Islamic values and ethics in education, research, and community engagement.

Publication and Dissemination of Knowledge

Through its publishing efforts, IIIT collaborates with IIUM to disseminate knowledge that reflects Islamic scholarship and thought, contributing to the university's academic environment.

To deepen collaboration with the IIUM community, it has introduced this magazine to provide a platform where intellectual and academic issues can be discussed through various writings by different authors, contributing to the advancement of knowledge and excellence.



Pictorial



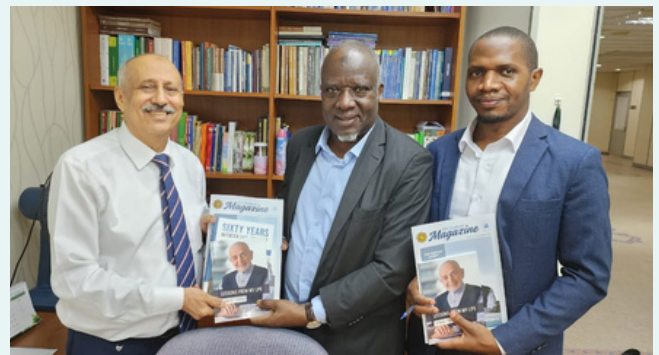
The team that is developing the Youth Leadership Training Materials - 13/01/2025



Prof Dawood Meeting with members of a Charity Organization Supporting new Muslims in Cambodia - Dec 2024



Prof Dawood standing shoulder to shoulder with his PhD Student Dr Mansour Khiati of Algeria who graduated in November convocation 2024 at Takrem Ceremony



The Vice Chancellor of the Islamic University in Uganda visited the IIIT Students' Office at IIUM. Prof. Dawood presented him with a gift of the first edition of the IIIT Students' Magazine and some books



IIIT Students taking a group photo after a day-long weekend training program at IIUM's Kulliyah of Engineering



The IIIT Students' Volunteers meeting, held on 3rd February 2025, focused on planning student programs and social activities



Prof Dawood in Britain with students who came to attend his Tarbiyah talk.



Prof Dawood and IIIT Students Representatives attended the 2 days Seminar on Digital Endowment at Pavilion Hotel KL on 19th Feb 2025.



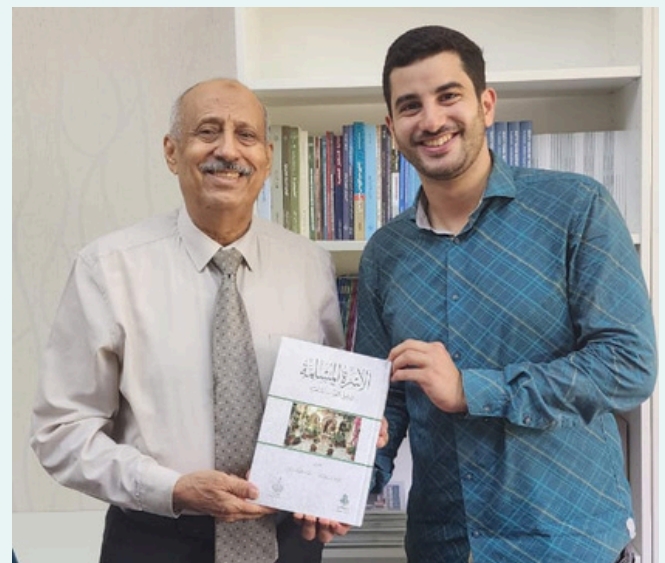
On 17th Feb 2025 IIUM hosted an International Conference on Digital Endowment: The Legitimacy of Their Applications and Their Role in Promoting Sustainable Development. Prof Dawood and his team of IIIT Students office attended the meeting



IIIT students taking a picture after Saturday Training sessions on 23rd Nov 2024



Prof Dawood attended a special dinner organized by INSAN on 18th February 2025



Prof Dawood giving a copy of IIIT Students' Magazine to Br. Bilal Abu-Gazala who paid him a visit

IIIT

Leadership and Team Building

The International Institute of Islamic Thought upholds teamwork rooted in Islamic teachings, emphasizing collaboration and mutual support. Believing that true leaders inspire and nurture others. It fosters a leadership culture where leaders motivate and empower future leaders, ensuring a legacy of guidance and shared purpose.

يد الله مع الجماعة
"The hand of Allah is with the group"
(Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 2166)



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