

## Islamic Inclusivity: Striking a Balance and Confronting Hijacks in Social Justice Advocacy

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**Abstract:** Inclusivity is an important aspect and it may bring forth many positive aspects. However, in modern times, inclusivity has been used as a tool to divide people from various social hierarchies. Challenged by the narrative, the researchers are interested in writing a paper that delves into inclusivity aspects from the Islamic perspective. The paper uses resources related to Islamic values such as Quranic verses, Maqasid al-Shariah, Hadith, historical contexts, and many others. Some of the important highlights of the paper emphasize the importance of inclusivity as it leads to a sense of belonging, a more welcoming atmosphere, equal opportunities, respect for cultural differences as well as diverse representation in leadership. Despite many positive aspects, inclusivity may also lead to negative happenstances such as tokenism, cancel culture, selective inclusivity, ideological conformity, and identity politics. As many young Muslims become activists, it is important to provide them with guidelines to ensure they know what is up and thus, they will promote the correct path of inclusivity. To reach that objective, they need to be well-informed, set a good example, seek guidance, form alliances, and demonstrate resilience. Islam emphasizes equality, justice, and compassion. Those values can lead the Ummah to better personal growth. Inclusivity, handled in the right way, is a force that helps to create peaceful and conducive communities.

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### 1. Introduction

The concept of inclusivity is an aspect that ensures the welcoming of people from various social levels (Daheri, 2022; Hakim, 2019; Maftuhin & Muflihati, 2022; Omar & Sari, 2019; Pranata & Laela, 2020; Yulitasari *et al.*, 2020). With the help of various Islamic values and Maqasid al-Shariah, this article would like to promote an Islamic society that embraces

diversity. However, inclusivity is not without an issue as it can potentially be hijacked by social justice extremists. This paper is developed to ensure that young Muslims are well equipped with the right knowledge so they will promote the right context of inclusivity. Therefore, they can stay true to the Islamic principles.

The history of Islam has showcased inclusivity and thus, Muslims are blessed with diverse heritage and cultural differences (Chandio, 2023). Islam teaches us many aspects that lead to the avoidance of individualism and affiliations. Quranic verses and Hadiths continuously promote justice, equality, and compassion. By doing so, Muslims can embrace unification in diversity.

The al-Quran embraces a diverse society, as stated in Surah Al-Hujurat (al-Quran 49:13). *"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."* The Surah highlights the intention of creating various tribes and nations so people can understand each other from various perspectives and points of view. The Quranic verse showcases that inclusivity brings forth positive values, and diversity can strengthen the Ummah rather than being a divisive aspect.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during his lifetime emphasized the importance of inclusivity among the Muslim community. It is shown in a document called The Constitution of Medina. The document serves as historical proof that there was a unified community consisting of Muslims and non-Muslims who embraced diversity despite their differences (Embong *et al.*, 2021; Tobroni, 2020). The Islamic principles are known to be the reasons for various cultural integration that leads to a more welcoming environment, higher level of sense of belonging, advocacy towards equal opportunities, promulgation of diverse representation in leadership, as well as respect towards cultural differences.

However, inclusivity is not without issues as it has been hijacked by social justice extremists from time to time. It is important to formulate the perfect balance of inclusivity that allows for a more prosperous society (Charkawi *et al.*, 2020). Some of the challenges related to hijacked inclusivity are selective inclusivity, tokenism, cancel culture, identity politics, and ideological conformity (Davies, 2016). Islam, despite its high emphasis on justice, does not promote and encourage the mentioned values as they are considered deviations from Islamic teachings (Finn, 2017). Muslims are expected to promote authentic equality, sincerity,

constructive dialogue, acknowledgment of individual merit, and intellectual diversity (Anwar *et al.*, 2023).

As young Muslims will be the beacon of the Islamic future, they must ensure they can confront the challenges by staying patient, resilient, and most importantly they need to employ strategic methods inspired by Islamic values (Saiful *et al.*, 2020). They must be knowledgeable when it comes to Islamic teachings related to inclusivity and lead by example (Shah, 2018). Apart from those, they need to seek guidance from Islamic scholars and other experts. To even strengthen their advocacy towards the perfect balance of inclusivity, they need to ally themselves with the right people. By doing so, the impact of their advocacy will be optimum (Putra *et al.*, 2023).

Islam is a religion that promulgates inclusivity, encourages diversity, and desires its followers, mainly young Muslims, to be the agents of change (Abdullah, 2020). By employing Islamic values and strategies, young Muslims are expected to enhance inclusivity among the Ummah and ensure everything they do is based on the inclusivity aspect showcased by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Islamic teachings (Qazi *et al.*, 2021).

This research also holds considerable significance for the Halal industry, primarily due to the industry's inherent requirement for inclusivity and diversity in its global consumer base (Elasrag, 2016). The Halal industry, which encompasses a wide range of products and services adhering to Islamic laws, serves not only Muslims but also non-Muslims seeking ethical, sustainable, and quality-assured products (Lubis *et al.*, 2016). In promoting an Islamic society that embraces inclusivity, as advocated by this paper, the Halal industry stands to benefit from a broader acceptance and understanding of its principles and offerings (Azam & Abdullah, 2021). An inclusive approach, guided by the teachings of Islam and the principles of Maqasid al-Shariah, can foster a more inclusive market environment, encouraging innovation and diversity in product offerings (Rahman *et al.*, 2017).

Moreover, understanding the importance of inclusivity can help stakeholders in the Halal industry navigate potential issues such as cultural sensitivities, ethical consumerism, and global market demands more effectively (Bidin *et al.*, 2021). By ensuring that young Muslims are well-equipped with the right knowledge of inclusivity within Islamic parameters, the industry can ensure its growth is aligned with Islamic ethical standards, thereby enhancing its appeal and sustainability in a competitive global market (Krishnan *et al.*, 2017). This alignment will not only strengthen the industry's foundation on Islamic principles but also promote a positive image of Islam globally (Izberk-Bilgin & Nakata, 2016).

The research objectives of this research are as follows:

1. Elaborate on the positive aspects of inclusivity
2. Identify potential challenges to inclusivity
3. Emphasize the role of young Muslims in advocating for inclusivity
4. Provide tips and strategies for young Muslims while promoting inclusivity
5. Incorporate important citations from the Quran, Hadith, and the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Foundational Islamic Principles of Inclusivity

The al-Quran, as the primary source of Islamic teachings, contains numerous verses that advocate for inclusivity, equality, and justice among all individuals. These principles are not limited to Muslims but extend to humanity at large, emphasizing the intrinsic dignity and worth of every human being regardless of race, gender, or social status.

One of the most significant verses in this context is found in Surah Al-Hujurat (al-Quran 49:13), which eloquently addresses humanity, stating: *"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."* This verse underlines the divine intent behind the creation of diverse communities and cultures, which is to foster a spirit of mutual understanding and respect. The criterion for nobility and honor in the eyes of Allah is not one's lineage or wealth but one's piety and righteousness. This verse serves as a cornerstone for Islamic inclusivity as it advocates for a society where justice and equality prevail, and where the diversity of human experiences is celebrated as a source of richness and strength.

Complementing the Quranic injunctions, the Hadiths further illustrate the Prophet's commitment to inclusivity. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) consistently demonstrated through his actions and teachings that all individuals are deserving of respect and dignity. One notable example is the Prophet's farewell sermon, in which he proclaimed, *"All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white; none have superiority over another except by piety and good action."* This profound statement encapsulates the Islamic ethos of inclusivity and equality, challenging the societal norms and prejudices of the time.

The concept of Ummah, or the global community of Muslims, is inherently inclusive. It transcends geographical, racial, and ethnic boundaries to unite individuals under the shared belief in the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH). The Ummah is not just a religious community; it is a collective embodiment of the Islamic principles of brotherhood, solidarity, and mutual support. This inclusivity is not only limited to spiritual matters but also extends to social, economic, and political spheres, encouraging Muslims to work towards the common good of all humanity.

## *2.2. Islamic Historical Context of Inclusivity*

The historical landscape of Islam provides substantial evidence of inclusivity, demonstrated through pivotal documents, governance models, and the active contributions of diverse groups within Islamic societies (Rusyidi, 2023). Notable among these are the Constitution of Medina, the governance of diverse societies under Islamic rule, and the significant contributions made by non-Muslims within Islamic civilizations (Diab, 2018).

The Constitution of Medina was drafted under the guidance of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It stands as one of the earliest examples of a formal agreement aimed at establishing a pluralistic society (Embong *et al.*, 2021). This document delineated a framework of rights and responsibilities for all citizens of Medina, regardless of their religious affiliations (Abid & Bioud, 2020). It established a community of believers (Ummah) that transcended tribal and ethnic lines, fostering an inclusive environment where Muslims, Jews, Christians, and pagans could coexist peacefully (Embong *et al.*, 2021). The Constitution of Medina effectively created a civic state based on religious tolerance, mutual respect, and social cohesion, setting a benchmark for inclusivity in governance (Embong, 2018).

Throughout history, Islamic governance has often been characterized by its inclusivity and tolerance towards different cultures and religions (Tobroni, 2020). This is evident in the Islamic Golden Age, where the Abbasid Caliphate, in particular, became a melting pot of diverse cultures, including Persians, Arabs, Christians, Jews, and many others (Junaidy & As-syafiiyah, 2023). Cities like Baghdad and Cordoba became centers of learning and cultural exchange, where scholars, scientists, and artists of various backgrounds contributed to a vibrant and progressive society. This inclusivity not only enriched the Islamic civilization but also facilitated the preservation and transmission of knowledge from the ancient world to the Renaissance (Embong *et al.*, 2020).

The contributions of non-Muslims to Islamic civilizations have been substantial and multifaceted (Jani *et al.*, 2015). In the realms of science, philosophy, medicine, and the arts, non-Muslim scholars played pivotal roles (Wildan, 2023). For instance, during the Islamic Golden Age, Christian and Jewish scholars were instrumental in the translation movement, which involved translating and preserving Greek, Persian, and Indian texts (Ramdany, 2021). Figures such as Hunayn ibn Ishaq, a Christian scholar, were key in this endeavor, ensuring that the knowledge of earlier civilizations was not lost but instead integrated and built upon within the Islamic world (Elkhairati, 2019). Moreover, non-Muslims held various positions of influence and authority in Islamic societies, contributing to the administration, culture, and economic development of these regions (al-Mujtahid & Sazali, 2023). Their roles were not limited to the peripheries of society but were integral to its very core (Zayyadi, 2015).

### 2.3. Contemporary Challenges to Inclusivity

The concept of inclusivity, originally intended to foster equality and mutual respect, has at times been co-opted by fringe elements within the social justice movement. These extremists may push inclusivity to an extent where it paradoxically becomes exclusive, sidelining voices that do not strictly adhere to their particular set of beliefs or ideologies. This can lead to a polarized environment where genuine dialogue and understanding are replaced by a rigid adherence to specific narratives (Lake, 2018). A related issue is the emergence of selective inclusivity, where certain groups or individuals are included or excluded based on subjective criteria, often influenced by prevailing social or political trends (Prati *et al.*, 2020). This can lead to tokenism, where superficial gestures of inclusion do not translate into meaningful engagement with diverse perspectives (McWhirter & McWha-Hermann, 2020).

Furthermore, the rise of cancel culture, where individuals or groups are ostracized for perceived or actual missteps, can undermine the spirit of inclusivity by fostering a climate of fear and conformity (Henckes *et al.*, 2018). Identity politics, which emphasizes particular social identities as the primary basis for political action and discourse, can also challenge inclusivity. While it aims to uplift marginalized groups, it can accidentally entrench divisions by prioritizing specific identities over shared human experiences and values (Quist-Adade, 2017). This focus on difference, rather than commonality, can hinder the development of inclusive communities that value diversity within a unifying framework (Romero, 2020). Ideological conformity, demanded by some groups within this context, can further stifle diversity of thought and expression which are essential components of a truly inclusive society (Mathiesen, 2015).

For Islamic communities, these contemporary challenges necessitate a thoughtful engagement with both traditional values and modern concepts of inclusivity (Walby, 2020). Islam's foundational principles, as discussed, advocate for inclusivity and justice. The challenge lies in interpreting and applying these principles in a way that respects tradition while also embracing the positive aspects of modern inclusivity ideals. This balance involves a nuanced understanding of Islamic teachings, a commitment to justice and equality, and a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with diverse perspectives.

#### *2.4. Maqasid Al-Shariah and Inclusivity*

The concept of Maqasid al-Shariah plays a critical role in addressing modern societal issues, emphasizing the importance of protecting fundamental human aspects to ensure a balanced and just society (Niazi, 2016). This foundational framework underscores the relevance of Maqasid al-Shariah in contemporary debates on social justice, human rights, and ethical governance, offering insights into these areas beyond traditional jurisprudence (Solikin & Wasik, 2023). Scholarly examinations highlight Maqasid al-Shariah's intrinsic connection to social justice and emphasize its role in promoting welfare and equity within society and advocating for the protection and inclusion of vulnerable groups, aligning with universal principles of justice and human dignity (Kasdi, 2019).

This body of work showcases the dynamic nature of Islamic law in addressing societal needs, ensuring that principles of fairness and compassion remain central to the Muslim community's approach to social justice (Rahim & Yusop, 2023). The discourse on equality and diversity within Maqasid al-Shariah reveals a profound appreciation for human diversity as divinely ordained. This interprets the objectives of Islamic law as supportive of inclusivity and advocating for a society where diverse backgrounds and perspectives are valued for collective growth and harmony (Wardiwiyono, 2020).

Contemporary applications of Maqasid al-Shariah in promoting inclusivity are evident in the works of modern Islamic scholars and thinkers, who demonstrate the practical implications of Maqasid al-Shariah in areas such as education, governance, and interfaith relations, serving as a blueprint for how Islamic principles can inform policies and practices that foster an inclusive environment (Al-ayubi & Halawatuddu'a, 2021). This adaptability of Maqasid al-Shariah to contemporary challenges highlights its potential to shape a more inclusive Islamic narrative as discussions on diversity and social justice continue to evolve on a global scale, providing young Muslims with the tools to navigate modern challenges and contribute



positively to both their communities and the broader discourse on inclusivity and social justice (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019).

### 3. Method

For the proposed research on exploring inclusivity from an Islamic perspective, a meticulous literature review methodology was adopted, delineating between primary and secondary sources to ensure a robust and nuanced understanding. Primary sources are comprised of the foundational Islamic texts: the al-Quran and Hadith. These texts were directly analyzed to extract teachings, parables, and directives that underpin the concept of inclusivity, equality, justice, and compassion within Islam.

Secondary sources included a wide array of scholarly works: interpretations of Maqasid al-Shariah, historical accounts that provide context to the primary Islamic texts, and contemporary academic journals that discuss the application and implications of inclusivity within an Islamic framework. These sources offered critical analyses, contextual backgrounds, and contemporary perspectives that enriched the understanding derived from the primary texts. The research meticulously synthesized insights from these secondary sources to frame the primary teachings within a broader socio-historical and contemporary context, thus providing a comprehensive view of inclusivity in Islam. This approach ensured a balanced analysis, leveraging the foundational Islamic texts while incorporating scholarly discourse and interpretations to construct a well-rounded exploration of inclusivity from an Islamic perspective.

### 4. Results and Discussions

#### 4.1. Positive Aspects of Inclusivity

##### 4.1.1. Creating welcoming environments

Islam highlights the importance of conducive, welcoming, and hospitable environments, as evidenced in verse 8 of Surah Al-Mu'minun: *“Those who are faithfully true to their Amanat and to their covenants, When they are entrusted with something, they do not betray that trust, but they fulfill it, and when they make a promise or make a pledge, they are true to their word.”* (al-Quran 23:8). The verse highlights the necessity of moral quality and it also encourages acceptance of different perspectives and values. These teachings promote values to conduct kind behaviors and hospitality even though we are dealing with people whom we had just met or those whom we are not familiar with (Corrao, 2020; Mohamed *et al.*, 2021; Saetgaraeva, 2019).



The Quranic verse above was supported by various examples from the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). His engagements and relationships with various races and people showcased a high level of dedication to hospitality and a welcoming environment despite dealing with religious and cultural differences. Some examples can also be found in the Constitution of Medina, a document that supports the notion of not only acknowledging diversity but it is also important to embrace and celebrate it (Embong *et al.*, 2021; Tobroni, 2020).

Apart from that, Islam also promotes an aspect called *sadaqah*, and if done correctly, it will even strengthen inclusive and welcoming environments (Bagasra, 2021). Acts of kindness formed in *sadaqah* lead to better sustenance, aid, and refuge for those in need. This notion is supported by Prophet Muhammad's saying: "*Charity does not in any way decrease the wealth and the servant who forgives, Allah adds to his respect; and the one who shows humility, Allah elevates him in the estimation (of the people)*" (Sahih Muslim 2588).

Muslims need to promulgate the values above by actively having more relationships with more diverse societies and communities. A mosque is a place where people from different walks of life meet and thus, it serves as a beacon to embody the concept (Ebrahimi & Yusoff, 2018; Harahap *et al.*, 2022; Jaffar *et al.*, 2020; A. Rahman *et al.*, 2015). Mosques should be places that organize various events that lead to interfaith dialogue, cultural exchange, and community engagement. By doing so, mosques can become beacons of inclusivity. This strategy is in line with the *Maqasid al-Sharia* and is expected to contribute to the prosperity of diverse communities (Oladapo & Rahman, 2016).

#### 4.1.2. *Fostering belonging*

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in one of his teachings stated a metaphorical comparison of the unity of the Ummah to one single body, as recorded in *Sahih Bukhari 6011*. The Hadith states that when an individual experiences pain in a specific area of their body, it triggers a systemic response in a sense of sleep disturbances and it leads to an increase in body temperature. The use of this unique metaphor highlights the collective obligation and interdependence that are available within the Ummah.

The analogy above showcases that it is more than just acknowledging mutual pain as it embraces the idea of a sense of belonging among the Muslim community. Those who are religious are expected to understand and feel the difficulties and pain of others and thus, they are encouraged to help others in need so the pain will no longer be felt.

#### 4.1.3. Promoting equal opportunities

Islam places a strong importance on equality and fairness (Assadullayev, 2018; Farashah & Abdolhosseinzadeh, 2020; H. Mohamed, 2019; Zedadra *et al.*, 2019). The al-Quran is the home of numerous verses showcasing the importance of justice. In Islam, one of the most celebrated values related to justice is the concept of equal opportunities. Surah Al-Hadid (al-Quran 57:25) highlights this principle, proclaiming, *"We sent aforetime our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, that people may stand forth in justice."* The term 'Balance' in the Quranic verse above is about the principles of equity and the equitable allocation of opportunities among individuals.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of justice in different aspects of governance and societal matters. Within the context of promoting equal opportunities, the Prophet made the following declaration: *"O people, your Lord is one, and your father is one. All of you belong to Adam, and Adam was created from dust. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white; [none have superiority over another] except by piety and good action"* (Hadith: Musnad Ahmad).

In terms of producing policies and ensuring equal opportunities, the caliphate of Umar ibn Al-Khattab showcased a very strong example. He implemented a comprehensive system to effectively guarantee the needs of the Muslim community in a fair and just manner. He once stated, *"By Allah, if a dog dies hungry on the banks of the River Euphrates, Umar will be responsible for dereliction of duty"* (Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya).

In modern Islamic thought, Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah once highlighted the importance of justice in economic and social aspects. Sheikh bin Bayyah is known to promulgate policies that break barriers and guarantee equitable access to education, employment, and social services (Fadhil, 2023; Farrar, 2022).

#### 4.1.4. Diverse representation in leadership

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was seen as a perfect example of leadership as he demonstrated a dedication to inclusion and competence in choosing individuals for leadership positions (Ahmed & Amiri, 2019; Salamun *et al.*, 2020; Sulaeman, 2020). The previously mentioned example is explained in several Quranic verses and Hadiths as we observe in various Quranic verses and Hadiths that emphasize meritocracy, justice, and the selection of the most capable individuals for leadership roles.

Surah Ar-Rum (al-Quran 30:22) underscores this point by stating, *"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed, in that are signs for those of knowledge."* The Hadith, which can be found in *Sunan Abi Dawood*, showcases more insight into the Prophet's dedication to encouraging diversity in leadership (Almuheiri & Abdullais, 2020). This Hadith highlights the Prophet's practice of appointing individuals from diverse backgrounds to positions of authority, placing particular emphasis on their competence and skills. This concept follows the Quranic principle that individuals who possess the utmost levels of piety and righteousness are regarded as the most esteemed among believers (al-Quran 49:13).

The Prophet's alliance with Salman al-Farsi serves as a testament to his continuous dedication to embracing diversity. The journey of Salman, a companion of Persian origin, from a state of enslavement to achieving a position as one of the Prophet's esteemed advisors and companions is a compelling illustration of Islam's strong refusal to conduct discriminatory practices. Islam emphasizes evaluating individuals based on their merits and character. Apart from that, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah holds strong importance in Islamic history. This agreement added clauses aimed at protecting the rights of various tribes (Abbas *et al.*, 2023).

#### 4.1.5. *Appreciating cultural differences*

Islamic teachings place significant emphasis on the recognition and observance of cultural diversity, which resonates with the Quranic affirmation that such diversity serves as evidence of the intricate work of Allah (Abd-allah, 2004). In Surah Ar-Rum (al-Quran 30:22), Allah declares, *"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed, in that are signs for those of knowledge."*

During the formative period of Islam, the city of Medina experienced a convergence of diverse cultures. It was a result of the migration of people from Mecca and the integration of the residents known as the Ansar. The Prophet's Constitution of Medina serves as a valuable example of a socio-political agreement that effectively accommodated a wide range of religious and cultural groups.

Islamic teachings also advocate for the principle of *"Adab,"* which consists of refined conduct. This principle encourages compliance to show respect and courtesy towards individuals from diverse backgrounds (Alshaar, 2017).

The Hajj, a pilgrimage to Mecca, is a significant manifestation of worldwide solidarity and cultural variety within the Islamic faith (Buitelaar & Leiden, 2015; Caidi, 2019; Shariati,

n.d.). A significant number of individuals who identify as Muslims, despite their cultural or ethnic differences, unite to fulfill this religious duty. The Hajj pilgrimage is characterized by different clothing, languages, and traditions. Thus, it serves to highlight the universal nature of Islam.

## 4.2. Potential Challenges

### 4.2.1 Selective inclusivity

The Islamic faith incorporates the principle of equality and strongly opposes any form of discrimination based on race, tribe, or social status (Dastebala *et al.*, 2014; Fox & Akbaba, 2015; Sayoud, 2012). The al-Quran explicitly condemns the practice of favoritism and selective inclusivity, as stated in Surah Al-Hujurat (al-Quran 49:13): *“O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.”*

Islam recognizes diversity as a purposeful means for individuals to learn from one another, fostering mutual understanding rather than perpetuating discriminatory attitudes. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained this in his Farewell Sermon (Farooq, 2018; M. A. Khan *et al.*, 2021; Ullah, 2021). He declared, *“All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white — except by piety and good action.”*

The Islamic principle of equality is not limited to rhetoric but extends to tangible actions. Individuals from diverse tribes and backgrounds held pivotal roles based on their competence and merit, breaking notions of tribal or racial superiority. Bilal Ibn Rabah, a former slave, exemplified this commitment to meritocracy by being appointed as the Prophet's *muezzin* (caller to prayer). The event showcased Islam's emphasis on recognizing individuals for their capabilities rather than arbitrary characteristics (Chande, 2012).

Selective inclusivity is where specific groups are favored at the expense of others (Cohrs *et al.*, 2015). Muslims are expected to treat one another with equity and justice, ensuring that no individual or group is marginalized based on arbitrary criteria. In contemporary society, the appeal of selective inclusivity may surface, often driven by misguided notions of achieving equal outcomes (Fleurbaey, 1995; Sugden & Wang, 2020). However, Islam champions the concept of equal opportunities rather than enforced equal outcomes. Social

justice extremists advocating for equal outcomes can potentially undermine the principles of justice and meritocracy strongly upheld by Islam.

#### 4.2.2. Tokenism

The concept of sincerity is very important in Islamic teachings (Cruz, 2013; Parrott, 2017). Tokenism is defined as the superficial inclusion of individuals only for the sake of appearances or meeting a quota. It is against a principle emphasized in Islam which values genuine intentions in every single action. (Moghaddam, 2017; Stroshine & Brandl, 2011; Yoder & Sinnett, 1985).

Surah al-Baqarah (al-Quran 2:197) says: *"The months of Hajj are well known. Whoever intends to perform Pilgrimage in these months shall abstain from sensual indulgence, wicked conduct, and quarreling; and whatever good you do, Allah knows it. Take your provisions for the Pilgrimage; but, in truth, the best provision is piety."* It means that actions performed with sincerity for the sake of Allah, and not for public acclaim, hold greater value in the sight of God.

A Hadith from Sahih Muslim also provides clarification regarding the Islamic perspective on sincerity. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) expressed the following statement: *"Actions are but by intention, and every man shall have only that which he intended"* (Sahih Muslim 1907).

Islam promotes the practice of evaluating actions based on intentions rather than relying on superficial appearances. The narrative of Abu Dharr al-Ghifari serves as a pertinent and illustrative example (Nisar *et al.*, 2023). The Prophet expressed disapproval towards Abu Dharr when he criticized Bilal solely because of his racial background.

Furthermore, the al-Quran emphasizes the importance of impartiality and fairness in dealings, without being influenced by any external factors such as personal biases or preferences. Surah An-Nisa (al-Quran 4:135) states, *"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just."*

#### 4.2.3. Cancel culture

Cancel culture refers to the act of excluding or boycotting individuals, companies, or institutions due to different ideological values (Clark, 2020; Romano, 2019; Velasco, 2021). In the Islamic context, cancel culture contradicts the basic principles of dialogue, understanding, and peaceful conflict resolution (Naamy, 2022; Naamy *et al.*, 2023).

*Surah Al-Hujurat (49:9) states, "And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allah. And if it returns, then make a settlement between them in justice and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly."*

The above Quranic verse notes the importance of resolving conflicts among people. Moreover, it is highly discouraged to use tactics of exclusion or cancellation (Allawi & Abd., 2023; Elius *et al.*, 2019; Karim & Saili, 2010; I. Khan *et al.*, 2020; Mazhisham *et al.*, 2020). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showcased this principle of nurturing discussions and dialogues on various events, one of the most notable was during the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. He ensured everything was done smoothly and engaged in peaceful resolutions and negotiations.

The concept of '*Husn al-Khuluq*' (excellent character) inspires believers to engage with others. When doing so, we must foster characteristics such as patience, tolerance, and comprehension (Hassan, 2018). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is described in Hadith as "*having the best character.*" Peaceful discussions and understanding were highly valued during his life. An example of this was his interactions with people of different faiths, including the Jewish and Christian communities of Najran.

Cancel culture is triggered by an absence of empathy, forbearance, and a readiness to participate in substantive dialogues. The Quranic principle of '*Ukhuwwah*' (brotherhood) emphasizes the importance of believers treating each other with compassion and patience, even when faced with disagreements (Ardi *et al.*, 2019). This is further supported by Surah al-Fussilat (al-Quran 41:34), that states, "*And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon, the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.*"

#### 4.2.4. Identity politics

Identity politics is characterized by the inclination of individuals from certain religious, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds to establish exclusive political coalitions, diverging from conventional, inclusive party politics. Islam emphasizes recognizing people for their acts and character rather than their particular identities or affiliations. As Muslims, we must defend these ideals by establishing a culture that embraces people for their character, acts, and devotion rather than for labels. Surah al-Isra (al-Quran 17:15) emphasizes: "*Whoever is guided is only guided for [the benefit of] his soul. And whoever errs only errs against it. And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another.*"

The life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showcases the act of surpassing the influence of identity politics. During the Hajj journey, he declared in the Farewell Sermon, *"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over a black, nor a black has any superiority over a white – except by piety and good action."* Islamic history also offers instances of leadership and government that prioritize merit above identity. Under the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), appointments were made based on competence, not considering race or ethnic affiliations (Nadvi, 2012; Rahmat *et al.*, 2023).

Islam strongly opposes any form of prejudice and stereotyping a person's identity. The al-Quran denounces the act of making judgments about individuals solely based on their outward appearances, as explicitly stated: *"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you"* (al-Quran 49:13).

#### 4.2.5. Ideological conformity

The concept of ideological conformity is if something happens in conformity with something such as a law or someone's wishes: it happens as the law says it should, or as the person wants it to (Jost *et al.*, 2018). Doing so is against the values of Islam as the religion places high importance on intellectual diversity. Engaging in reflection, contemplation, and embracing diverse perspectives are some characteristics that the al-Quran finds to be of high significance. Surah Sad (al-Quran 38:29) states, *"This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded."*

Islam promotes and encourages believers to actively engage in critical thinking and embrace diverse perspectives. The Prophet embraced open dialogues and diverse perspectives within the Muslim community. His leadership embodied the fundamental value of intellectual diversity. The Hadith recounts occasions where the companions of the Prophet Muhammad expressed varying opinions. In these examples, the Prophet acknowledged and showed respect for these different perspectives.

The al-Quran encourages contemplation of the various occurrences seen in nature. The creation of Allah is abundant and diverse, indicating a divine purpose for a wide range of perspectives and comprehension (al-Quran 30:22). Furthermore, the Islamic principle of *"ijtihad,"* which refers to the practice of independent reasoning, serves as a testament to the



recognition of diverse scholarly perspectives within the realm of Islamic jurisprudence. This process involves deriving legal rulings by considering contextual differences. Doing so will lead to better flexibility and adaptability in legal interpretations. (Aziz, 2021; Syukur & Syahbudin, 2020; Yilmaz, 2003).

The suppression of diverse opinions not only goes against the Quranic emphasis on reflection but also destroys the intellectual and spiritual development of the Muslim community. The Islamic tradition highly acknowledges the value of diverse opinions. Constructive dialogue and knowledge enhancement are encouraged. A Hadith narrated by Ibn Majah emphasizes the significance of having a diverse range of scholars: *“The differences of my Ummah are a mercy.”*

#### 4.3. The Role of Young Muslims to Navigate Inclusivity Aspect

Comprehensive strategies such as good discussions, better education, curriculum development mentoring, as well as improved communicativeness are crucial to ensure better advocacy towards inclusivity. All those activities must be based on the teachings of the al-Quran and Hadith (Khalil, 2016). It is also important to design such workshops and seminars that provide practicality to the activities related to inclusivity advocacy (Barsihannor *et al.*, 2022).

Participating in interfaith and intercommunity discussions is essential for fostering mutual comprehension and acceptance (Johanson, 2016). By incorporating inclusion concepts into the Islamic curriculum, the importance of inclusivity is ingrained at different educational stages, fostering a mentality of embracing and honoring diversity (Zamzami, 2016). Mentorship programs are of utmost importance in guiding young advocates as they navigate through obstacles (Saloot *et al.*, 2016).

Facilitating connections between individuals and seasoned academicians or community leaders promotes self-improvement, fortitude, and proficient leadership (Syarifuddin, 2023). Concurrently, it is critical to employ strategic communication across multiple media platforms to distribute positive narratives on inclusivity within the Muslim community (Cantori, 2021). Through the collective implementation of these strategies, a holistic framework is formed to foster inclusivity among the young Muslim population, thereby establishing a community that is constructive and harmonious (Mahomed, 2022).

As Islam puts a high emphasis on justice, compassion, and equality, it is important to ensure that the future of Islam, young Muslims, are equipped with the right knowledge to promote

inclusivity. Promoting such value is honorable but doing so is not without challenges. However, we must see the challenges as an opportunity to better the Ummah as a whole. Resilience and patience are two qualities Islam cultivates and those two are important when we are facing challenges. Hardships, if dealt with correctly, can be something to foster personal growth, wisdom, and strength. The verse in Surah al-Baqarah (al-Quran 2:286) states: “*God does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear: in his favor shall be whatever good he does, and against him whatever evil he does. O our Sustainer!*” The following are some of the conducts the young Muslims need to do to ensure they can navigate inclusivity in the right manner.

#### *4.3.1. Stay informed*

Before advocating the so-called inclusivity, young Muslims are expected to equip themselves with a deep understanding of Islamic values related to inclusivity. This can be further strengthened by comprehending Quranic verses and Hadiths that highlight the importance of tolerance, justice, and respect for diversity (Farantika *et al.*, 2022).

#### *4.3.2. Lead by example*

The young Muslims must also lead by example. Before advocating inclusivity, they need to be acting inclusively, both in personal interactions and community engagements. The life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplifies tolerance and acceptance and can be seen as a model for leading by example (Khanam, 2018).

#### *4.3.3. Seek guidance*

When young Muslims are dealing with challenges, they must seek guidance from experienced professionals and scholars. It is also great to find some mentors who can provide them with various perspectives and different knowledge. Consulting with relevant people will lead to a smooth and better-meaning advocacy towards inclusivity (Asmanidar, 2023)

#### *4.3.4. Build alliances*

To promote inclusivity, young Muslims find allies and collaborators in doing such. They need to find some people and institutions with similar goals and values. This is supported by Surah al-Ma'idah (al-Quran 5:2) which underscores the power of collective endeavors (Farantika *et al.*, 2022).

#### *4.3.5. Be resilient*

The young Muslims are also expected to have a higher level of resilience. Anticipating difficulties is a natural aspect of the trip, although seeing them as chances for individual and collective development is more in accordance to Islamic principles. The Quranic concept of Sabr, as stated in Surah al-Baqarah (al-Quran 2:155), highlights the need to exhibit resilience and perseverance when confronted with challenges (Wani, 2023).

## **5. Conclusion**

The examination of inclusivity within Islam reveals a strong dedication to parity, differences, and fairness. Quranic teachings advocate for the inherent value of every human, despite their origin, and they also foster a comprehensive concept of inclusiveness. The Hadith also encourages us not to engage in prejudice. It also highlights the importance of genuine acceptance of differences. Selective inclusivity is also not supported in Islam as it expects its believers to promote a merit-based system, prioritizing ability and morality above superficial standards.

Moreover, the paper emphasizes the significance of equal opportunities as equal outcomes. We must reevaluate the quotas of certain events and formulate the best way to ensure the balance between meritocracy and affirmative action. The Quranic teachings encourage Muslims to actively advocate for authentic inclusivity and equality.

There are promising opportunities for future research in the field of inclusivity within Muslim communities. An important area of research pertains to examining the impact of inclusivity on the overall welfare of Muslim communities. Research initiatives should focus on exploring the impact of inclusive practices on promoting social harmony, improving mental health, and strengthening community resilience.

In addition, the undertaking of comparative studies with other religious communities can provide valuable insights. By conducting a comparative analysis of inclusivity practices in Muslim communities and those of other faiths, we can gain insights into shared challenges and effective strategies. This approach encourages cross-religious dialogue and the development of collaborative solutions.

When considering how to navigate inclusivity, the critical importance of young Muslims' active participation is emphasized. Young Muslims can foster the development of societies that embody the inclusive ideals that are intrinsic to Islamic teachings by adopting the principles of justice and equality.

The Halal industry is deeply rooted in Islamic values of inclusivity and equity. It can exemplify these principles by promoting ethical, quality-based products and services. Young Muslims' engagement in this sector, guided by Islamic teachings, can drive innovation and ethical practices, appealing to a diverse global market and reinforcing Islam's commitment to fairness. This synergy enhances the industry's role in fostering economic justice and social harmony.

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