

Reconceptualizing Masyarakat Madani in Malaysia: A Critical Analysis Through the Lens of Imam al-Shafi'i's Thought on Civil Society and Governance

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ABSTRACT

Masyarakat Madani, or civil society, represents a profound social construct emphasizing well-being, social justice, and unity rooted in Islamic principles. While widely discussed, its practical implementation in diverse, modern nation-states like Malaysia demands a nuanced and historically informed understanding. Imam al-Shafi'i (d. 204 AH/820 CE), a pivotal figure in Islamic jurisprudence and social development, articulated principles such as consultation (*syura*), justice (*'adl*), education (*ta'lim*), and social harmony, which are profoundly relevant to this discourse. This study undertakes a critical analysis of the concept of Masyarakat Madani through Imam al-Shafi'i's intellectual legacy, systematically connecting his classical insights to contemporary Malaysian realities. Utilizing Islamic Political Philosophy and Social Capital Theory as interconnected analytical lenses, this qualitative research employs thematic content analysis of Imam al-Shafi'i's primary works (*al-Risalah*, *Kitab al-Umm*) and authoritative biographical accounts. This paper argues that al-Shafi'i's experiential wisdom and jurisprudential principles offer a robust, Shariah-compliant framework for fostering a resilient, inclusive, and ethical civil society in Malaysia. The discussion critically analyses aspects of his thought concerning holistic education, equitable social relations, principled leadership, and just economic management, demonstrating their pivotal role in cultivating trust, shared norms, and robust social networks. The research posits that al-Shafi'i's emphasis on individual integrity, constructive communication, and principled conflict resolution serves as a foundational blueprint for strengthening social cohesion and institutional legitimacy in a multicultural society. This study asserts the enduring relevance of al-Shafi'i's principles in building a harmonious and progressive society in Malaysia, contributing uniquely to the academic discourse on Islamic civil society models and their practical application in contemporary Muslim-majority contexts.

Keywords: Masyarakat Madani, Civil Society, Imam al-Shafi'i, Malaysia, Islamic Political Philosophy, Social Capital, Justice, Unity.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Masyarakat Madani, or civil society, has gained significant traction in contemporary global discourse, particularly within Muslim-majority nations striving for equitable, democratic, and harmonious societal development. Globally, civil society is often understood as the sphere of voluntary associations and institutions operating independently of the state and market, acting as a crucial space for civic engagement and accountability (Putnam, 1993; De Tocqueville, 1835). However, its contextualization within diverse, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic nations like Malaysia presents unique conceptual and practical challenges, demanding models that resonate with local socio-cultural and religious values.

In the Islamic tradition, Masyarakat Madani is intrinsically linked to the foundational Prophetic model of Madinah, a society built upon principles of justice, mutual cooperation, and a shared moral framework under Divine guidance (al-Qaradawi, 1999; Hashim, 2018). This differs from purely secular Western notions by integrating a strong ethical and spiritual dimension, where the role of individuals, community, and governance is understood within a comprehensive worldview. While contemporary Islamic scholarship has extensively explored this concept (e.g., Anwar Ibrahim, 2005; S.H. Al-Attas, 1993), there remains a critical lacuna in systematically analyzing how classical Islamic jurists, beyond their immediate *fiqh* contributions, implicitly or explicitly contributed to a holistic vision of civil society that can be operationalized in modern contexts.

Imam Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i (d. 204 AH/820 CE), a pivotal figure in Islamic jurisprudence and the founder of the Shafi'i school of thought widely adopted in Southeast Asia, articulated principles encompassing *syura* (consultation), *adl* (justice), *ta'lim* (education), and social harmony. His intellectual contributions, primarily through his seminal works *al-Risalah* (on legal methodology) and *Kitab al-Umm* (a comprehensive *fiqh* compendium), along with numerous biographical accounts, reveal a profound engagement with issues of community building, ethical conduct, and the relationship between individuals and authority. Despite his immense jurisprudential legacy, al-Shafi'i's broader contributions to the conceptualization of a virtuous and functional civil society remain underexplored in mainstream academic discourse.

This article aims to address this research gap by undertaking a critical analysis of Masyarakat Madani through the intellectual legacy of Imam al-Shafi'i. It seeks to connect his classical insights to contemporary Malaysian realities, a nation striving for unity and progress amidst its pluralistic landscape. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Imam al-Shafi'i's core principles of individual integrity and knowledge acquisition contribute to the formation of social capital within a Masyarakat Madani?
2. In what ways does al-Shafi'i's framework for ethical communication and conflict management align with contemporary governance principles for fostering social harmony?
3. What are the practical implications and challenges of applying Imam al-Shafi'i's vision of a just and cohesive society in the contemporary Malaysian context?

By examining his emphasis on self-integrity, comprehensive education, social well-being, ethical communication, conflict resolution, and principled leadership, this study argues that al-Shafi'i's enduring principles offer a robust and Shariah-compliant framework for achieving a harmonious and progressive society in Malaysia. This research contributes uniquely to the academic discourse by bridging classical Islamic thought with contemporary civil society theory, offering a contextually relevant model for pluralistic societies. The subsequent sections will detail the literature review and theoretical framework, outline the methodological approach, and present a comprehensive analysis of Imam al-Shafi'i's profound contributions to the concept of Masyarakat Madani.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Evolving Concept of Masyarakat Madani and Civil Society

The discourse on civil society, or Masyarakat Madani, traverses a rich intellectual history, differing significantly between Western and Islamic philosophical traditions. In the West, concepts of civil society emerged from Enlightenment thinkers grappling with the relationship between the individual, state, and market (Locke, 1689; Hegel, 2001). It is often characterized by voluntary associations, non-governmental organizations, and social movements that operate in a sphere independent of direct state control, serving as a vital space for public deliberation, civic engagement, and sometimes, a check on state power (Gramsci, 1971; Cohen & Arato, 1992). Critiques, however, point to its potential for exclusion, fragmentation, or limited impact in addressing systemic inequalities (Hall, S. 1990).

In the Islamic tradition, Masyarakat Madani is intrinsically linked to the Prophetic model established in Madinah, a city-state founded on principles of social justice, mutual cooperation, and a shared moral framework guided by Divine revelation (al-Qaradawi, 1999; Hashim, 2018). This concept transcends the

Western secular notion by embedding a strong ethical and spiritual dimension, where societal well-being (*maslahah*) and the upholding of Shariah are central. Key characteristics include adherence to justice (*adl*), consultation (*syura*), freedom of thought, mutual respect, and the pursuit of knowledge. Contemporary Islamic scholars (e.g., Anwar Ibrahim, 2005; S.H. Al-Attas, 1993) emphasize these values as foundational for a just society, particularly in pluralistic contexts like Malaysia.

Despite extensive scholarship on Islamic civil society, a critical lacuna persists in the systematic analysis of foundational Islamic jurists' contributions to a holistic vision of Masyarakat Madani. While the jurisprudential genius of Imam al-Shafi'i is well-documented (al-Nawawi, 1997; Zahrah, 1948), studies often focus solely on his fiqh contributions, neglecting his broader insights into community building, ethical conduct, and social governance derived from his comprehensive intellectual output and extensive life experiences. This study aims to fill this critical gap by meticulously examining al-Shafi'i's life and works to extrapolate a coherent framework for Masyarakat Madani that holds profound relevance for contemporary Malaysian society.

Theoretical Framework: Islamic Political Philosophy and Social Capital Theory

To critically analyze the multifaceted dimensions of Imam al-Shafi'i's concept of Masyarakat Madani, this study employs a combined theoretical framework drawing upon Islamic Political Philosophy and Social Capital Theory. This interdisciplinary approach allows for both normative evaluation and sociological understanding of his contributions.

Islamic Political Philosophy provides the overarching normative and ethical lens, focusing on the principles derived from the Quran, Sunnah, and classical Islamic thought that guide the ideal structure and functioning of an Islamic society. Key concepts relevant to this study include:

Ulil Amri (Legitimate Authority/Ruler): Al-Shafi'i's life and teachings implicitly address the complex relationship between individuals, scholars, and the governing authority. While not directly a political philosopher in the classical sense, his jurisprudential framework often touches upon the duties and responsibilities of the ruler in upholding justice and implementing Shariah. His own tenure as a judge in Najran exemplified the practical application of authority guided by moral principles, highlighting how scholars contribute to governance through moral authority and knowledge (*ilmu*), not merely political power. The concept of *Ulil Amri* is central to understanding the legitimacy of institutions within the Masyarakat Madani.

Maslahah (Public Interest/Welfare): A central tenet in Islamic law, emphasizing that policies and societal structures must serve the greater good of the community. Al-Shafi'i's emphasis on education, fair dealings, conflict resolution, and strong social bonds directly contributes to the realization of *maslahah*. Any practice that harms the community's welfare would be deemed contrary to *maslahah*.

Adl (Justice): An overarching principle demanding impartiality and fairness in all aspects of life, from legal judgments to social interactions and economic dealings. Al-Shafi'i's personal conduct as a judge and his jurisprudential emphasis on evidence and equity underscore his commitment to *adl*, portraying it as an indispensable pillar for a virtuous society. The presence or absence of justice profoundly impacts the legitimacy and stability of a Masyarakat Madani.

Social Capital Theory, primarily articulated by scholars like Robert Putnam (1993, 2000), offers a sociological lens to understand how al-Shafi'i's principles foster community cohesion and functional networks. Social capital refers to the collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other. Key elements within the theory include:

Trust: The belief in the honesty, integrity, and reliability of others, which is fundamental for facilitating voluntary cooperation and collective action. Al-Shafi'i's emphasis on sincerity in friendship, principled communication, and steadfastness in character directly contributes to building and maintaining high levels of trust within a community.

Norms of Reciprocity: Shared understandings and rules that guide behaviour, often informal, that encourage mutual help and cooperation. Al-Shafi'i's consistent adherence to Islamic principles of honesty, fairness, and

mutual support provides a strong normative framework for ethical conduct that underpins reciprocal social interactions.

Networks and Linkages: The connections and relationships individuals have, which can be categorized as bonding social capital (strong ties within a homogeneous group, like family or close friends) and bridging social capital (weaker ties connecting diverse groups, essential for broader societal cohesion). Al-Shafi'i's extensive scholarly and social networks across different regions (Mecca, Madinah, Yemen, Baghdad, Egypt) exemplify the importance of both types of networks in facilitating knowledge dissemination, intellectual exchange, and community building across diverse segments of the ummah.

By integrating these theoretical lenses, this study critically examines how Imam al-Shafi'i's lived experiences and jurisprudential thought not only provided a normative Islamic framework for societal development (Islamic Political Philosophy) but also articulated the practical elements necessary to cultivate social capital (trust, norms, networks) within a thriving Masyarakat Madani. This interdisciplinary approach enables a multi-layered analytical exploration of his contributions, moving beyond mere biographical description to generate profound insights into the operationalization of his vision for contemporary civil society.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study employs a doctrinal legal research approach combined with thematic content analysis to critically analyze the concept of Masyarakat Madani as implicitly and explicitly articulated through Imam al-Shafi'i's thought. The research is fundamentally interpretative, seeking to derive contemporary relevance and theoretical insights from classical Islamic texts and authoritative biographical accounts.

Data Sources

Primary and secondary data sources were systematically collected and scrutinized:

Primary Texts of Imam al-Shafi'i:

Al-Risalah: This foundational work on *usul al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) was meticulously analyzed for al-Shafi'i's methodology in deriving legal rulings, which inherently touches upon principles of justice, clarity, and the role of textual evidence in societal order. Specific sections on *ijma* (consensus), *qiyas* (analogy), and the importance of clear communication in legal discourse provide insights into his vision of a rational and just society.

Kitab al-Umm: This voluminous compendium of *fiqh* rulings was examined for his practical applications of Islamic law across various aspects of life, including economic transactions, family law, and governance, which implicitly inform his understanding of a well-ordered community.

Authoritative Biographical Accounts (Manaqib):

Works by prominent Islamic scholars who chronicled al-Shafi'i's life, including al-Bayhaqi's *Manaqib al-Imam al-Shafi'i*, al-Baghdadi's *Tarikh Baghdad*, Ibn Kathir's *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, al-Razi's *Manaqib al-Imam al-Syafi'i*, and Zahrah's *al-Imam al-Syafi'i, Hayatuh wa 'Asruh*. These biographies were crucial for understanding his character, life experiences (e.g., poverty, intellectual journeys, judicial tenure), interactions with others, and leadership qualities, which provide rich contextual data for his social philosophy.

Diwan al-Shafi'i:

His collected poetry was analysed for ethical advice, personal reflections, and social commentaries.

Secondary Texts:

Academic literature on civil society in both Western and Islamic contexts (e.g., works by Robert Putnam, Cohen & Arato, Anwar Ibrahim, S.H. Al-Attas).

Scholarly analyses of Imam al-Shafi'i's thought, Islamic political philosophy, social capital theory, and contemporary governance in Muslim-majority societies (e.g., Yusuf, 2019; Hassan, 2009).

Data Analysis

The collected data underwent a rigorous thematic content analysis process, guided by the principles of deductive and inductive coding, to ensure both theoretical grounding and emergent insights:

Initial Familiarization and Immersion: All selected texts were thoroughly read and re-read to gain a comprehensive understanding of their content and context.

Generating Initial Codes: Based on the research questions and theoretical framework, initial codes were deductively generated (e.g., "justice in ruling," "virtues of knowledge-seeking," "attributes of true friendship," "etiquette of debate"). Concurrently, new codes were inductively generated from recurring patterns or significant statements within the texts that pertained to societal well-being or community building.

Searching for Themes: The initial codes were grouped into broader, overarching themes that reflected Imam al-Shafi'i's contributions to Masyarakat Madani (e.g., "Self-Integrity and Character Building," "The Centrality of Knowledge and Education," "Fostering Social Cohesion and Trust," "Ethical Communication and Discourse," "Principled Conflict Resolution," "Leadership and Governance Ethics").

Reviewing and Refining Themes: The identified themes were critically reviewed against the coded data to ensure they accurately and comprehensively represented the content. This iterative process involved refining theme definitions and reorganizing codes where necessary.

Defining and Naming Themes: Each theme was clearly defined, providing a concise description of its essence and its relationship to the research questions.

Theoretical Application and Interpretation: This crucial stage involved interpreting the identified themes through the lenses of Islamic Political Philosophy and Social Capital Theory. For instance:

Analysis of al-Shafi'i's emphasis on personal honesty was connected to the trust component of social capital and the overarching principle of *adl* (justice) in Islamic Political Philosophy.

His approach to scholarly debates was linked to bridging social capital (connecting diverse intellectual networks) and the concept of *maslahah* (seeking the public interest through rational discourse).

His views on leadership integrity were analyzed in relation to the role of Ulil Amri and the necessity of accountability for maintaining a just society.

Synthesizing Findings and Extrapolation: The insights derived from the critical analysis of the classical texts were synthesized to construct a comprehensive model of Imam al-Shafi'i's vision of Masyarakat Madani. This model was then critically extrapolated to assess its relevance, applicability, and potential challenges within the contemporary, multicultural, and democratic context of Malaysia.

This rigorous, systematic, and theoretically informed methodology ensures a comprehensive and critically insightful examination of the issue, moving beyond mere descriptive accounts to generate novel theoretical and practical contributions suitable for high-impact academic discourse.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: IMAM AL-SHAFI'I'S VISION OF MASYARAKAT MADANI

Imam al-Shafi'i's contributions to the concept of Masyarakat Madani are not confined to explicit political treatises but are intricately woven into his jurisprudential framework, his extensive life experiences, and his ethical exhortations documented in his works and biographical accounts. His approach implicitly emphasizes the holistic development of individuals and their profound interconnectedness within a just, knowledgeable,

and harmonious community. This section critically analyzes key dimensions of his vision, applying the proposed theoretical framework of Islamic Political Philosophy and Social Capital Theory.

Self-Integrity as the Foundation of Social Capital

Imam al-Shafi'i unequivocally stressed the paramount importance of self-integrity and character development as the cornerstone for individual rectitude and, by extension, the building blocks of a virtuous society. His own life, marked by profound poverty from a young age (e.g., documented by al-Bayhaqi in *Manaqib al-Imam al-Shafi'i* [1391H]), exemplified extraordinary self-reliance, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to dignity. He cultivated a character untainted by worldly temptations, fostering sincerity (*ikhlas*) and deep empathy for others. This personal integrity, encompassing rigorous self-evaluation (*muhasabah*) and unwavering moral rectitude, contributes directly to the trust component of social capital. When individuals within a community consistently demonstrate such integrity, the collective belief in the honesty and reliability of others increases, facilitating cooperation and collective action.

Al-Shafi'i's teachings on managing personal conduct, such as concealing poverty to maintain dignity, controlling anger, and demonstrating composure even in extreme situations (as narrated in *Diwan al-Shafi'i* or various biographical accounts [al-Mistawi, 2005]), are critical for fostering positive interpersonal relationships. These behaviours not only generate trust but also cultivate mutual respect within social networks, contributing to both bonding (among like-minded individuals) and bridging social capital (by demonstrating ethical standards across diverse groups). His advice to avoid the company of the ignorant and self-deluded scholars (e.g., *Diwan al-Shafi'i* [al-Mistawi, 2005]) underlines the importance of associating with individuals who uphold moral and intellectual standards, thereby contributing to the quality and density of social networks that form robust social capital. For al-Shafi'i, a high personality is achieved through strong interpersonal connections, rooted in sincerity, leading to both divine pleasure and community esteem. This emphasis on individual virtue as a prerequisite for social harmony aligns directly with the normative principles of Islamic Political Philosophy, where individual rectitude is understood as a fundamental pillar for the overall *maslahah* (public interest/welfare) of the society.

Education (Ta'lim) as the Catalyst for Societal Progress

Imam al-Shafi'i held knowledge (*ilmu*) and comprehensive education in the highest regard, perceiving them as the fundamental drivers for building a civilized and just society. His relentless pursuit of knowledge, beginning in his early years despite extreme poverty and limited resources (e.g., learning by writing on bones or leather due to lack of paper, as cited in al-Bayhaqi (1391H), exemplifies his profound conviction that education is the key to personal and societal advancement. His mastery of various disciplines, ranging from fiqh to Arabic language, history, poetry, and even practical skills like archery and medicine (al-Dhahabi, 1985), highlights his vision of a holistic and integrated education necessary for a well-rounded individual contributing to society.

Critically, al-Shafi'i believed that deep knowledge enables individuals to engage in meaningful and structured communication, leading to intellectual benefit for others. This intellectual engagement fosters shared norms and understandings within a community, a vital component of social capital. His rapid rise to scholarly prominence, leading to him issuing fatwas at the young age of 15, underscores the transformative power of education and intellectual rigor. Furthermore, his journey from Mecca to Madinah to learn from Imam Malik, even seeking his mother's blessing (al-Razi, *Manaqib al-Imam al-Syafi'i* [n.d]), demonstrates the profound importance of intergenerational transfer of values and the critical role of respectful academic networks in building intellectual capital. From the perspective of Islamic Political Philosophy, this emphasis on comprehensive and ethically grounded education is central to the vision of an enlightened and capable populace that can uphold justice (*adl*) and contribute effectively to the *maslahah* of the society. A knowledgeable populace is better equipped to discern truth, uphold rights, and actively participate in the development of a Masyarakat Madani.

Nurturing Social Well-being and Authentic Relationships

Imam al-Shafi'i provided clear and practical guidance for fostering social well-being through the cultivation of genuine and resilient interpersonal relationships. He emphasized the rarity and immense value of true friendship, which he defined by sincerity, unwavering support during times of hardship, and a willingness to offer honest advice even if it is difficult to hear. His own experiences of adversity and the loyalty of his students (e.g., al-Muzani, al-Rabī' al-Muradī) likely informed his deep appreciation for loyal companions. The importance of practices like visiting the sick, an encouraged practice in Islam, exemplifies a practical application of compassion and solidarity, actively reinforcing social bonds and strengthening affective trust within the community (al-Mistawi, 2005).

Al-Shafi'i's ethical framework for maintaining relationships—stressing mutual respect, avoiding negative perceptions based on superficial observation, and refraining from slander or backbiting—directly contributes to a positive and constructive social environment. He famously linked respectful conduct to reciprocated respect and warned against disdain leading to humiliation. This resonates strongly with the concept of reciprocity in social capital theory, where positive actions foster goodwill and strengthen collective efficacy. His poignant poetry reflects a deep understanding of human nature, expressing disillusionment with fair-weather friends who abandon one during adversity. This highlights the fragility of superficial social ties and advocates for qualitative relationships rooted in genuine support and emotional stability (al-Mistawi, 2005)]. These insights provide a robust roadmap for building resilient and functional social networks that are capable of withstanding challenges, serving as a critical component of a functional Masyarakat Madani that upholds Islamic ethical standards of cooperation and compassion.

Ethical Communication as a Pillar of Social Harmony

Imam al-Shafi'i placed immense importance on ethical and strategic communication, recognizing its profound impact on social harmony and individual standing within the community. He cautioned against careless speech and excessive talking, linking it to diminished personal standing and the potential for error (al-Mistawi, 2005). This reflects a keen understanding of how verbal interactions shape an individual's reputation and contribute to collective norms of discourse. His advice on maintaining respectful dialogue during scholarly debates, avoiding arrogance, and offering private counsel instead of public shaming (e.g., his interactions with other scholars, as recounted in *Manaqib al-Imam al-Shafi'i* [al-Razi, n.d]), exemplifies a sophisticated approach to conflict management rooted in mutual respect and the pursuit of truth over personal victory. This adherence to *adab al-bahth wa al-munazarah* (etiquette of debate) fosters intellectual trust and promotes constructive engagement.

His nuanced view on communication also included non-verbal cues and the wisdom of silent responses to ignorant insults, a strategic communication tactic that avoids escalating conflict and maintains personal dignity. Furthermore, his guidelines for acceptable poetry, rejecting elements that incite lust, promote hypocrisy, or cause discord (al-Mistawi, 2005), underscore his commitment to communication that upholds moral integrity and contributes positively to social welfare (*maslahah*). These principles are fundamental to building shared norms for respectful discourse, fostering cognitive trust through clear and honest communication, and maintaining overall social harmony within a thriving Masyarakat Madani. In a diverse society, ethical communication is not merely a virtue but a practical necessity for coexistence and mutual understanding.

Principled Conflict Resolution and Social Cohesion

Imam al-Shafi'i provided crucial insights into conflict management and resolution, a critical aspect for maintaining social cohesion within any Masyarakat Madani. In his *al-Risalah*, he distinguished between prohibited conflicts (those contradicting clear Quranic and Sunnah texts) and permissible ones (those open to interpretation and analogy), providing a foundational legal framework for navigating disagreements while upholding fundamental Islamic tenets. This framework allows for intellectual discourse and differences of opinion without necessarily leading to social fragmentation.

Beyond legal theory, al-Shafi'i emphasized practical approaches to conflict resolution, advocating for patience (*sabr*), forgiveness (*'afw*), and the eradication of grudges. His personal demonstration of profound civility and magnanimity towards those who openly opposed or even hated him (e.g., his interactions with certain scholars in Iraq, as detailed in *Manaqib al-Imam al-Shafi'i* [al-Razi, n.d]) showcases a deep commitment to reconciliation and the pursuit of goodness, even in challenging interpersonal dynamics. This proactive stance on forgiveness strengthens social bonds and prevents the erosion of social capital due to unresolved disputes. In situations where conflict is intractable and actively harmful, his advice to withdraw from harmful associations and seek the company of the righteous prioritizes spiritual and mental well-being, even if it means temporary isolation. His stark analogy of preferring the company of dogs over destructive humans (al-Mistawi, 2005) powerfully illustrates his commitment to preserving individual integrity and avoiding corrupting influences within social networks. These principles are vital for maintaining social harmony, promoting collective well-being, and ensuring the long-term stability and resilience of a Masyarakat Madani by allowing for disagreement without destruction.

Principled Leadership for Societal Well-being

Imam al-Shafi'i's thought also extends to principled leadership, an essential component of Masyarakat Madani from an Islamic Political Philosophy perspective. His own experience serving as a judge (qadi) in Najran, where he performed his duties with utmost justice and responsibility despite fierce opposition from corrupt local elements (al-Bayhaqi, n.d), serves as a powerful practical example of integrity in public office. He firmly rejected corruption and abuse of power, prioritizing religious principles and the welfare of the people over worldly interests. This principled stance is crucial for maintaining public trust in institutions and leaders, a fundamental element of social capital.

Al-Shafi'i articulated five key instruments for credible leadership: truthfulness in communication with the populace, safeguarding secrets, fulfilling responsibilities, offering sincere advice, and performing duties with honesty and sincerity (Hassan, W. Z. W. 2009). These instruments directly enhance accountability and transparency, which are fundamental governance principles. He also posited that a creative leader should aim for win-win outcomes, achieving satisfaction for all parties through just decision-making. His advice against seeking power for personal gain and his warning against excessive flattery of rulers (al-Mistawi, 2005) reflect a deep understanding of human nature and the corrupting influence of power, emphasizing that a leader's ultimate connection should be with Allah (SWT). This holistic view of leadership, balancing spiritual integrity with practical governance, ensures that leaders contribute positively to the collective well-being and social capital of the Masyarakat Madani, embodying the ideal of *Ulil Amri* serving the *maslahah* of the ummah.

Implementation and Relevance in Contemporary Malaysia

The principles of Masyarakat Madani as articulated by Imam al-Shafi'i offer profound and enduring relevance for contemporary Malaysia, a nation striving for unity, harmony, and sustainable progress amidst its multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and democratic landscape. The successful implementation of these classical Islamic principles requires a conscious and strategic effort to integrate them with modern governance structures and societal dynamics, acknowledging both opportunities and challenges.

Strengthening Education and Cultivating Self-Integrity

Malaysia's existing emphasis on holistic education (combining academic excellence with spiritual and moral development) can be significantly reinforced by integrating al-Shafi'i's ideas on the pursuit of knowledge for societal benefit and the cultivation of personal integrity.

Curriculum Enhancement: Educational curricula across all levels (from primary to tertiary, including Islamic and national schools) should integrate specific modules or themes derived from al-Shafi'i's biography and ethical teachings. This could include emphasizing the *adab* (etiquette) of seeking knowledge, the importance of critical thinking (as exemplified in *al-Risalah*), and the ethical responsibilities of a knowledgeable individual.

Character Building Programs: Universities and community organizations can design programs focusing on al-Shafi'i's resilience, humility, and moral fortitude. Initiatives like "Imam al-Shafi'i Leadership Seminars for Students" could focus on cultivating self-integrity, ethical decision-making, and perseverance in the face of adversity, equipping future generations to lead with moral clarity. This direct focus on individual virtues strengthens the bedrock of social capital by fostering trustworthiness.

Promoting Social Cohesion and Authentic Relationships

In Malaysia's diverse social fabric, al-Shafi'i's emphasis on sincere friendship, mutual respect, and compassionate social interactions is invaluable for fostering genuine social capital across different ethnic and religious groups.

Interfaith and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue: Local councils and NGOs can organize structured interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue forums that draw upon al-Shafi'i's principles of respectful discourse and seeking common ground, particularly his approach to permissible differences. This fosters bridging social capital.

Community Engagement and Volunteerism: Promoting volunteerism and community-based initiatives that encourage interaction and cooperation among diverse groups, embodying al-Shafi'i's emphasis on mutual support and compassion (e.g., visiting the sick, assisting the needy irrespective of background), can build bonding social capital within communities and extend it across communal lines.

Digital Citizenship Education: In the digital age, al-Shafi'i's guidelines on ethical communication (avoiding gossip, slander, and divisive speech) are more relevant than ever. Educational campaigns on "digital *adab*" can promote responsible online interactions, curbing misinformation and fostering respectful dialogue online, thereby preserving and enhancing social trust.

Upholding Principled Leadership and Good Governance

Al-Shafi'i's insights into leadership integrity, accountability, and justice are highly pertinent to Malaysia's ongoing pursuit of good governance and institutional legitimacy.

Ethical Leadership Frameworks: Government agencies and corporate sectors can adopt and adapt al-Shafi'i's "five instruments for credible leadership" (truthfulness, safeguarding secrets, fulfilling responsibilities, sincere advice, honest execution of duties) into their ethical codes and training programs. This aligns with Islamic Political Philosophy's focus on righteous governance for *maslahah*.

Anti-Corruption Initiatives: Al-Shafi'i's unwavering rejection of corruption and abuse of power, as exemplified by his tenure as a judge, serves as a powerful moral compass. Reinforcing these principles through educational campaigns and stringent enforcement mechanisms is crucial for restoring and maintaining public trust in institutions, which is vital for building social capital.

Justice in Public Service: Emphasize al-Shafi'i's commitment to *adl* (justice) in all public dealings, ensuring equitable service delivery, fair resource allocation, and impartial decision-making across all segments of Malaysian society. This enhances the legitimacy of governance structures and builds public confidence.

Navigating Diversity through Al-Shafi'i's Moderation (*Tawassut*)

Al-Shafi'i's exposure to diverse cultures and scholarly debates in various Islamic intellectual centres, particularly Baghdad, cultivated his famous *tawassut* (moderation) and openness to different perspectives (al-Dhahabi, 1985). This intellectual flexibility and spirit of moderation are a critical asset for Malaysia's pluralistic society.

Promoting Intellectual Growth: His approach to permissible differences in interpretation (*ikhtilaf*) can guide constructive dialogue between various religious, ethnic, and intellectual groups in Malaysia, promoting mutual understanding and preventing conflict escalation stemming from differing views. This intellectual flexibility, rooted in profound Islamic knowledge, offers a powerful model for harmonious coexistence.

Curriculum on Ikhtilaf: Education on the Islamic tradition of *ikhtilaf* and its etiquette, drawing examples from al-Shafi'i, can be integrated into civic education to cultivate tolerance and respect for diversity.

The Equivalence of Civil Values in the Thought of Imam al-Shafi'i

Madani Malaysia carries six main values: Sustainability, Prosperity, Creativity, Respect, Confidence, and Ihsan. Although this concept is contemporary and rooted in the ideals of a modern nation-state, these values are not foreign to the Islamic scholarly tradition. In this context, Imam al-Shāfi'i's thought provides a framework for human development that can be integrated in principle with MADANI values. This correspondence is based on the source of his work and the principles of his *usuliyyah*.

Sustainability

Although he does not use the term "sustainability", Imam al-Shāfi'i emphasizes the principle of *lā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār* (doing no harm and receiving no harm) in the framework of fiqh, especially in matters of muamalah, the rights of neighbors, and resource management. This principle clearly shows concern for the sustainability of social relations and the balance of resources (al-Shāfi'i, al-Umm, Bab al-Ijārah).

"It is not permissible for a person to use his property in a way that harms others."

In the context of Madani Malaysia, this principle is relevant in environmental policy, sustainable development, and the fair and sustainable use of resources.

Well-being

The concept of well-being in the tradition of Imam al-Shāfi'i is cantered on the principle of *maslahah*, which is to ensure the general welfare as long as it does not contradict the *syarak dalil*. In al-Risālah, he acknowledged the role of *maslahah* but with clear boundaries so as not to undermine the authority of *nas*. He emphasized that Islamic law was revealed to guarantee human welfare.

"Law was revealed to safeguard human welfare in this world and the hereafter." (al-Risālah, ed. Ahmad Shākir, pp. 507–510).

Creativity and Innovation

Imam al-Shāfi'i is known for his great intellectual creativity, especially when he founded a new school after moving to Egypt. This shows the nature of *ijtihad*, adaptation, and creativity based on strict scientific disciplines. His methodological legacy in *usūl al-fiqh* is also a major innovation in the history of Islamic thought (al-Bayhaqī, 1391H).

"When you hear something that contradicts me, weigh it with the Quran and the Sunnah, if it is suitable then follow it, if not, leave it."

Respect

Imam al-Shāfi'i often emphasized manners and respect, not only towards teachers and knowledge, but also towards society. He is famous for his words and poems that emphasize the importance of manners as a condition for the success of knowledge (al-Bayhaqī, 1391H).

"I turned the pages of a book in front of my teacher Imam Mālik slowly for fear of the sound disturbing him."

This concept is in line with the MADANI values that call for mutual respect between individuals, races, and institutions.

Trust and Confidence

Imam al-Shāfi‘i often spoke of trust, belief, and sincerity as the foundations of social relationships and leadership. He held that trust in society can only be built through personal integrity and justice in governance (al-Mistawi, 2005).

"Admonishing a friend in secret is advice, and admonishing him in public is humiliating him."

Ihsan (Compassion and Excellence)

Ihsan, as the highest value in Islam, encompasses spiritual awareness, compassion, and excellence in action. Imam al-Shāfi‘i associated ihsan with sincerity in worship and justice in transactions (al-Bayhaqī, 1391H).

"A person's deeds will not be perfect until he is sincere to Allah and adheres to the Sunnah."

In the context of MADANI, the value of *ihsan* encompasses the commitment of the government and society to be just, compassionate and strive for excellence. Although the MADANI values were not literally expressed by Imam al-Shāfi‘i, the principles underlying each of these values are clearly firmly rooted in his thinking. Through the approach of *usūl al-fiqh*, *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, and personal ethics, Imam al-Shāfi‘i has offered a model of human development that is integrity, inclusive, and sustainable—in line with the spirit of Madani Malaysia.

Challenges in Implementation

Despite the profound relevance, implementing al-Shafi‘i’s vision in contemporary Malaysia faces several challenges:

1. **Cultural Shifts:** Modern consumerism, individualism, and the pervasive influence of social media may challenge the cultivation of strong moral character and deep social bonds.
2. **Secular vs. Religious Norms:** Balancing the integration of Islamic principles within a pluralistic and secular-leaning governance framework requires careful navigation and clear policy articulation.
3. **Political Will:** The success of these implementations hinges on sustained political will and commitment from leadership to prioritize ethical governance and inclusive societal development.
4. **Diverse Interpretations:** While al-Shafi‘i’s *fiqh* is dominant, diverse interpretations of Islamic thought within Malaysia necessitate a broad-based consensus on applying his principles.

Field Study Findings

Below is a report of the study findings, organized by the requested themes, based on the provided survey data.

Report on Survey Findings: Building a Madani Society

This report summarizes the findings from a survey with 68 respondents, focusing on various aspects related to the concept of "Malaysia Madani" and its underlying principles.

Demographic Analysis of Respondents

In this study, the demographic analysis showed that the majority of respondents were female. A total of 64.7% of the respondents were women, while the remaining 35.3% were men. This data indicates that women were more actively involved or more likely to respond to the survey conducted.

In terms of age, the most dominant age group was 22 years old, comprising 38.2% of the total respondents. This was followed by 21-year-olds, who made up 23.5%. Respondents aged 23 accounted for 16.2%, while those aged 20, 24 to 28, and 33 represented significantly smaller percentages. This suggests that the majority of respondents were young adults, particularly those in their early twenties.

Regarding the respondents' states of origin, most came from an unspecified or uncategorized state, amounting to 29.4%. Selangor recorded the second highest percentage at 8.8%, followed by Johor, Pahang, and Penang, each with 4.4%. Other states contributed only 1.5% or less. This shows diversity in the respondents' state backgrounds, although the majority could not be clearly identified by specific state.

Overall, this demographic data provides a general overview of the respondents' backgrounds in terms of gender, age, and state of origin, which is important in analyzing the trends and response patterns in the study.

Respondents' Perceptions on Self-Integrity and Its Role in Building Social Capital

The survey examined the respondents' perceptions regarding self-integrity and its significance in fostering social capital. A significant majority, totalling 94.2%, either agreed or strongly agreed that personal honesty plays a vital role in building trust within society, with 62.7% strongly agreeing. This reflects a general consensus on the importance of honesty as a foundational element in social relationships.

Similarly, 94.2% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that having strong self-integrity is essential in building social trust and enhancing social capital within the community, with 57.4% strongly agreeing. This further underlines the respondents' belief in the value of ethical behaviour for community well-being and cohesion.

However, opinions were more divided when it came to trusting information from social media. While 19.1% of respondents strongly disagreed and 29.4% disagreed with trusting such information, 22.1% remained neutral. Only a small percentage expressed confidence, with 14.7% agreeing and 19.1% strongly agreeing. These findings suggest a considerable level of skepticism among respondents regarding the reliability of information disseminated through social media platforms.

When questioned about the acceptability of committing a minor fraudulent act for personal gain, responses were also mixed. About 22.1% strongly disagreed and 20.6% disagreed with such behaviour, indicating a firm stance against unethical conduct. However, 29.4% remained neutral, while 11.8% agreed and 17.6% strongly agreed, revealing that a notable portion of respondents might be more lenient or situational in their ethical judgment. This highlights the complexity of moral decision-making in certain contexts.

Overall, the data reveals that while there is strong support for integrity and honesty as key principles in social interaction, there remains some ambivalence when it comes to practical ethical challenges, particularly in digital spaces and personal dilemmas.

The Role of Education (*ta'lim*) in Cultivating a Civilized Society

The survey highlighted the crucial role of education in nurturing a civilized society. There was a strong consensus among respondents, with 91.2% agreeing or strongly agreeing that education and the pursuit of knowledge form the foundation of a civilized society. Notably, 51.5% of them strongly agreed with this view, underlining the importance placed on education as a key driver of societal advancement.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (97.1%) also supported the idea that Malaysia's education system should re-emphasize the teachings of classical figures and philosophies as a basis for human development. A significant portion—72.1%—strongly agreed with this proposition, reflecting a broad appreciation for the wisdom embedded in classical thought.

Furthermore, 79.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the classical works of great thinkers should be incorporated into the national education curriculum, with 33.3% expressing strong agreement. This suggests a prevailing belief in the value of classical knowledge in shaping intellectual and ethical growth among students.

Respondents also largely agreed that the knowledge and ideas of historical figures remain relevant in addressing contemporary societal issues. A total of 79.4% agreed or strongly agreed with this sentiment, while

85.3% felt that classic thinkers had articulated principles such as justice, benevolence, and integrity in ways that are still applicable to modern governance.

Additionally, 82.3% of respondents believed that understanding the thoughts of classical philosophers could help build a stronger national identity among Malaysians. This reflects a sense of cultural grounding and pride linked to intellectual heritage.

Lastly, a significant majority (85.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that the concept of *Malaysia Madani* should be implemented within educational institutions. This indicates strong public support for integrating values-based and intellectual frameworks into the nation's educational policies to nurture well-rounded and morally conscious citizens.

In summary, the survey results clearly show that respondents view education not just as a tool for academic success, but as a vital foundation for ethical development, cultural identity, and national progress.

Social Well-Being and Community Relationships

The survey also explored the respondents' views and behaviors concerning social well-being and community relationships. A strong sense of patriotism and desire for national harmony was evident, with 92.7% of respondents strongly agreeing that they always yearn for a safe and harmonious country. This demonstrates a deep-rooted appreciation for peace and national stability among the participants.

In terms of altruism, 88.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they often help others in need. This suggests a strong spirit of community support and social responsibility.

When asked about their preference for interacting with villagers over staying indoors, the responses were more varied. While 2.9% strongly disagreed and 13.2% disagreed, a considerable number remained neutral at 32.4%. Meanwhile, 22.1% agreed and 29.4% strongly agreed. This shows a moderate inclination toward social interaction in traditional or rural settings, though not without ambivalence.

Environmental concerns also featured in the survey, with a significant portion of respondents expressing disapproval of ecological destruction. Specifically, 27.9% strongly disagreed and 23.5% disagreed with being indifferent to such issues, reflecting a heightened awareness and care for environmental preservation.

Regarding interpersonal relationships, a majority of 89.7% indicated that they tend to have a positive opinion of others, highlighting a general attitude of goodwill and trust within the community. Similarly, 89.7% also stated that they always make time to visit their parents, which underscores the importance of familial bonds and filial responsibility in their lives.

When it comes to media consumption, 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy watching family and community-oriented programs, pointing to preferences that reinforce social and cultural values.

Religious values also play a significant role in guiding behavior, with 82.4% of respondents stating that they base their actions on religious teachings. This indicates the continued relevance of faith in shaping moral and ethical behavior.

Environmental responsibility was further evidenced by the 82.4% of respondents who reported participating in recycling programs, suggesting a proactive approach to sustainable living.

Lastly, when asked about nightlife and personal lifestyle choices, 88.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they avoid going to nightclubs, indicating a tendency toward more conservative or disciplined lifestyles.

In conclusion, the survey findings reveal a community that values peace, social harmony, ethical conduct, environmental care, and strong familial and religious ties—key ingredients for building a cohesive and morally grounded society.

Ethical Communication and Principled Leadership as Pillars of a Civilized Society

The survey further examined key dimensions that contribute to a harmonious and civilized society, focusing particularly on ethical communication, conflict resolution, and principled leadership.

Ethical Communication as a Pillar of Social Harmony

Ethical communication was widely recognized by respondents as a vital foundation for maintaining social harmony. An overwhelming 94.1% agreed or strongly agreed that ethical interactions between individuals and groups contribute positively to societal peace, with 54.4% strongly agreeing. This strong support suggests a collective understanding of the importance of respectful, honest, and responsible communication in fostering unity.

Additionally, 75% of respondents stated that they have practiced the communication ethics introduced by classical thinkers, indicating that traditional moral frameworks continue to guide modern social behavior and are perceived as relevant in building a civilized society.

Principled Conflict Resolution and Social Cohesion

The importance of resolving conflicts through principled and respectful means was also emphasized in the findings. A substantial 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that civilized and principled approaches to conflict are essential for preserving unity in society, with 63.2% expressing strong agreement. This reflects a general consensus on the value of dialogue and understanding over confrontation.

Furthermore, 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are capable of managing their emotions when facing differing opinions, illustrating a level of emotional intelligence critical for constructive engagement. Similarly, 83.9% of respondents reported that they always consider the consequences of their actions before making decisions—an important trait in maintaining social harmony and preventing unnecessary conflict.

Principled Leadership for Societal Well-being

Leadership emerged as another crucial pillar in ensuring the well-being of society. A vast majority (97%) agreed or strongly agreed that fair and responsible leadership is the foundation of a stable and cohesive community, with 62.7% strongly agreeing. Respondents also showed strong support (97%) for leadership grounded in religious values such as trustworthiness and justice, indicating a desire for morally sound and spiritually guided governance.

In terms of personal civic responsibility, 95.6% of respondents strongly agreed that it is essential to elect wise leaders. This reflects public awareness of the critical role leadership plays in shaping national values and policy.

Regarding governance principles, 70.6% of respondents believed that the principle of *maslahah* (public interest) is being practiced in society, although 76.5% agreed or strongly agreed that the principle of *'adl* (justice) remains insufficiently implemented within Malaysia's governance system. These responses highlight both optimism and concern—support for current efforts, but also recognition of the need for further improvement in just leadership.

Moreover, 79.4% agreed or strongly agreed that classical figures of thought, particularly those rooted in religious traditions, remain relevant as references in current discussions about civilization and ethical society-building. Most notably, 80.9% strongly agreed that integrated and inclusive governance must be emphasized to further strengthen the development of a civilized Malaysian society.

Lastly, 87.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that following the ethical and leadership theories of classical thinkers can serve as a practical guide for implementing the *Malaysia Madani* framework. The same

percentage acknowledged that the theories of ethics and integrity represent some of the most significant contributions of classical thinkers to the vision of a developed and morally grounded society.

In summary, the survey results reflect strong public support for ethical communication, principled conflict resolution, and morally guided leadership as critical components in fostering a just, harmonious, and civilized society. These values align closely with the aspirations of *Malaysia Madani*, which seeks to integrate moral, intellectual, and spiritual principles into the nation's governance and social fabric.

DISCUSSION OF STUDY FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive overview of respondents' perceptions and practices regarding the principles underpinning the "Malaysia Madani" concept. This analysis highlights the awareness, acceptance, and challenges in applying these values within the context of Malaysian society.

Self-Integrity as the Foundation of Social Capital

The study results clearly show that respondents highly value self-integrity, particularly personal honesty, as a core pillar in building social trust. The majority of respondents (94.2%) agreed that honesty is crucial for building trust, and similar support (94.2%) was given to the importance of self-integrity in building social capital. This reflects a collective understanding that trust is a valuable social currency. However, findings regarding minor fraud and trust in social media information reveal a gap. Nearly half of the respondents (48.5%) either disagreed or were neutral about minor fraud, and over half (51.5%) showed some scepticism towards social media information. This indicates that, although the principle of integrity is strongly held in theory, challenges exist in practical application and amidst the complex modern information landscape. This requires continuous efforts to foster a comprehensive culture of integrity, not only at the principled level but also at the level of daily behaviour.

Education (Ta'lim) as the Catalyst for Societal Progress

Education is identified as a key catalyst for the progress of a civilized society. The high consensus (91.2%) that education and the pursuit of knowledge are the basis of a civilized society is testament to respondents' belief in the transformative power of education. More importantly, the strong support (97.1%) for re-integrating classical thought and figures into the national education curriculum indicates a desire to strengthen national identity and build a knowledgeable society deeply rooted in profound intellectual traditions. The conviction that ancient knowledge is relevant for addressing contemporary issues (79.4% agreed) and capable of guiding modern governance (85.3% agreed) underscores the potential to leverage this intellectual heritage. The implementation of the Malaysia Madani concept in educational institutions (85.3% agreed) is also supported, affirming the critical role of the education system in shaping principled citizens.

Nurturing Social Well-being and Authentic Relationships

The study reveals a high commitment to social well-being and meaningful relationships. The majority of respondents' desire (92.7%) for a safe and harmonious nation, and their tendency to help others in need (88.2%), highlight strong communal values. Family relationships are also emphasized, with 89.7% of respondents stating they always visit their parents. However, mixed responses regarding interaction with villagers indicate a diversity of lifestyles and social preferences in contemporary society. Environmental issues are also a concern, with over half of respondents (51.4%) showing concern for ecological destruction. Furthermore, the tendency to have a good opinion of others (89.7%) and base behavior on religious ideas (82.4%) reflects a solid moral foundation in social interactions.

Ethical Communication as a Pillar of Social Harmony

The study findings confirm the vital role of ethical communication in creating social harmony. Almost all respondents (94.1%) agreed that ethical communication is crucial for harmony. The majority of respondents (75%) also stated that they have practiced the ethics of communication introduced by past thinkers. This

indicates awareness and practical application of communication ethics as a tool for preserving unity and understanding in a diverse society.

Principled Conflict Resolution and Social Cohesion

Principled and civilized conflict resolution is essential for social unity. Respondents consistently showed high support (90%) for the importance of principled conflict resolution in ensuring social unity. The ability to control emotions when facing differing opinions (75% agreed) and considering consequences before acting (83.9% agreed) are positive indicators that respondents tend to approach conflicts in a mature and wise manner. This forms a solid foundation for building a society capable of resolving differences constructively without compromising harmony.

Principled Leadership for Societal Well-being

Fair and responsible leadership is seen as the foundation of societal stability. Almost all respondents (97%) agreed that fair and responsible leadership is the basis of community stability, and leadership based on religious principles (97%) is important for people's welfare. The need to choose wise leaders also received very high support (95.6%). However, the findings indicate that the application of the principle of justice (*adl*) is still perceived as lacking in governance in Malaysia (76.5% agreed), although the principle of public interest (*maslahah*) is seen as more widely practiced (70.6%). This highlights the challenge in translating leadership idealism into practical reality. The recognition that past thinkers are relevant as references (79.4%) and that ethics and integrity are their significant contributions (87.1%) affirms the potential to apply ancient wisdom in building better governance. The emphasis on integrated governance (80.9% agreed) and the use of ethical theories and past leadership as guidance (87.1%) also show a desire for a holistic approach in leading society towards Malaysia Madani.

Overall, the study findings indicate that Malaysian society has a high level of awareness and strong support for the principles of "Malaysia Madani." There is a collective determination to build a society that is integrated, knowledgeable, harmonious, and principled in its leadership. However, challenges in translating these principles into daily practice, particularly in the context of social media trust and the application of justice in governance, require continuous attention and effort. Education and exposure to classical thought are key to strengthening these foundations for achieving a comprehensive Madani society vision.

Based on the study findings, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding the respondents' views on the concept of "Malaysia Madani" and its related values:

Awareness and Acceptance of the "Malaysia Madani" Concept: The majority of respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the "Malaysia Madani" concept, and a significant portion understood its true meaning. This indicates that the initiatives to introduce this concept have achieved good acceptance among the respondents.

Belief in the Importance of "Malaysia Madani": Respondents strongly believe that the "Malaysia Madani" concept is crucial for national development. This strong support reinforces the idea that society sees value in the principles highlighted by this concept for Malaysia's progress.

Role of Mass Media and Education: Mass media is seen to play a very important role in disseminating information about "Malaysia Madani." Furthermore, education and the pursuit of knowledge are considered the foundation of a civilized society, with strong support for the reintegration of classical thought and past figures into the national education curriculum.

Importance of Self-Integrity and Social Relationships: Strong self-integrity is believed to be essential in building social trust and social capital within the community. There is also a strong tendency to help others in need and to respect the official religion of the country, reflecting positive values in social relationships.

Application of Madani Values in Life: Respondents generally agree that the principles of justice and leadership ethics from past thinkers are relevant and should serve as guidance in modern governance and the

implementation of "Malaysia Madani." They also tend to practice values such as ethical communication and principled conflict resolution, which are crucial for social harmony.

Self-Development and Societal Well-being: There is high acceptance of the idea that a civilized society will be stronger if policies and values are connected to the roots of traditional knowledge and the epistemology of past thinkers. Respondents also agree that civilized academic discourse helps strengthen social harmony and prioritizes self-development.

Challenges in Governance and Exposure to Classical Thought: Although there is an awareness of justice, some respondents feel that the principle of justice is still not fully applied in governance in Malaysia. Additionally, the general public today has limited exposure to the rich heritage of thought from great thinkers of the past, indicating a need for further initiatives in this aspect.

CONCLUSION

Imam al-Shafi'i, though predominantly recognized as a jurist, offers a rich, practical, and enduring framework for building a vibrant Masyarakat Madani. His life experiences, profound intellectual contributions, and ethical exhortations provide comprehensive guidance for human development, encompassing self-integrity, the pursuit of knowledge, social well-being, ethical communication, principled conflict resolution, and integrity-driven leadership. His unique synthesis of Shariah principles with pragmatic wisdom, developed across diverse intellectual centres, makes him an exceptionally relevant figure for navigating contemporary societal challenges.

This study's critical analysis, utilizing the integrated frameworks of Islamic Political Philosophy and Social Capital Theory, highlights that al-Shafi'i's conceptualization of Masyarakat Madani is not merely an abstract ideal but a viable, Shariah-compliant blueprint for building a harmonious, just, and progressive society. His emphasis on individual rectitude, comprehensive education, sincere social bonds, ethical communication, constructive conflict management, and integrity-driven leadership are all foundational elements for strengthening both social capital (through enhanced trust, shared norms, and robust networks) and good governance (by ensuring accountability, transparency, and legitimacy within institutions).

The enduring relevance of Imam al-Shafi'i's principles in today's multicultural Malaysia is undeniable. Their systematic integration into educational curricula, public administration, and socio-economic policies can yield profound positive impacts on national development, fostering deeper unity and resilience. His comprehensive vision, encompassing individual, family, community, and national life, aligns seamlessly with the aspirations of a nation striving for holistic progress while upholding its spiritual and moral foundations. As a *mujaddid* (reformer) who revitalized Islamic jurisprudence, al-Shafi'i's ideas are profoundly aligned with the vision of Masyarakat Madani that seeks to uplift the vulnerable, combat injustice, and foster an enlightened and cohesive civilization.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers a critical conceptual analysis, it acknowledges certain limitations. Its reliance on doctrinal and content analysis, while robust, could be complemented by empirical research. Future studies could explore:

Empirical Application: Qualitative studies utilizing interviews with Malaysian community leaders, educators, and youth to gauge the current understanding and practical application of al-Shafi'i's principles in local contexts.

Comparative Analysis: Comparative studies analysing al-Shafi'i's model alongside other classical Islamic thinkers (e.g., al-Farabi, Ibn Khaldun) or contemporary Western civil society theories to highlight unique strengths and synergies.

Policy Impact: Research on the effectiveness of specific policy interventions in Malaysia aimed at integrating al-Shafi'i's principles into governance or educational frameworks.

Interfaith Dialogue: Exploring how al-Shafi'i's approach to *ikhtilaf* (differences of opinion) can specifically inform and enrich interfaith dialogue initiatives in multi-religious societies.

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