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EDUCATING & HUMANIZING



HUMAN

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Official Magazine for the
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

EQUALITY
EQUALS
INEQUALITY

The Famous
"Animal Exam"
Analogy.

THE WORLD
CUP

As a Mirror of Global Society.

2K KETIDAKADILAN
PERLAKSANAAN
SGD 4

Kemiskinan dan Kebencian.

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About UTM

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) is a leading innovation-driven entrepreneurial research university in engineering science and technology. It is located both in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia and Johor Bahru, the southern city in Iskandar Malaysia, which is a vibrant economic corridor in the south of Peninsular Malaysia.

HUMAN is the official magazine for the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UTM, published biannually, with the aim to share educational information, events, exciting news, tips and tricks in life and even advertisements regarding higher education, especially pertinent to the faculty.

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**PROF. DR. ARIEFF SALLEH
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DEAN'S FOREWORD

EMBRACING EQUALITY, CHALLENGING INEQUALITY

Welcome to the latest issue of Human, the official magazine for the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

In this edition, we explore the captivating theme of “**Equality Vs Inequality**”. It is with great pleasure and sincere appreciation that I welcome you to this latest edition of Human, the official magazine of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. This issue explores the timely and significant theme of “Equality vs Inequality”—a subject that continues to shape societies, influence public discourse, and challenge our collective responsibility in building a more just and inclusive future.

As the world experiences rapid social, economic, and technological transformation, inequalities remain evident across many aspects of human life. From education and employment to healthcare, digital access, and social participation, opportunities are not always distributed fairly. While progress has created remarkable possibilities, it has also highlighted the urgent need to ensure that no individual or community is left behind. As scholars and future leaders, we must strive to understand these realities through critical inquiry, empathy, and evidence-based solutions.

At the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, we believe that meaningful progress begins with understanding people, respecting diversity, and upholding the principles of justice, dignity, and mutual respect. Through interdisciplinary research, thoughtful dialogue, and community engagement, we seek to cultivate graduates who are not only academically competent but also socially responsible and ethically grounded. Equality is not merely about treating everyone the same; it is about recognising different circumstances and ensuring that every individual has a fair opportunity to succeed.

The articles featured in this edition present diverse perspectives on the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to inequality within contemporary society. They encourage us to reflect on how policies, institutions, communities, and individuals each play a role in promoting fairness and social cohesion. More importantly, they remind us that sustainable development can only be achieved when inclusivity becomes a shared commitment rather than an ideal aspiration.

I hope this edition of Human inspires meaningful reflection, constructive dialogue, and renewed determination to contribute towards a society where equality is valued, diversity is celebrated, and every individual is empowered to realise their fullest potential. May the knowledge and insights shared within these pages encourage all of us to become thoughtful advocates for positive social change and responsible global citizens.

EQUALITY EQUALS INEQUALITY

By Abid Zulfadhli Razali, Akademi Bahasa (FSSH) UTM.



**“We love the idea
of a level
playing field”**

As language teachers, we are trained to treat every student exactly the same. We give them identical textbooks, grade them by the same strict grammar rules, and expect them to speak and write in the exact same **“correct”** way. On paper, this looks like perfect equality.

In reality, treating everyone exactly the same is the fastest way to manufacture inequality. As the Greek philosopher Aristotle famously noted, injustice results just as much from treating unequals equally as from treating equals unequally.

**To visualize this,
consider the famous
“animal exam” analogy.**

Picture a classroom where the students are a monkey, an elephant, a dog, and a goldfish. To ensure absolute fairness, the teacher gives them a standardized final exam: “To pass the course, you must climb that tree.”

The test is completely equal and no one gets special treatment. Yet, while the monkey breezes through with almost zero effort, that poor fish is branded a failure for the rest of its life. This is inherently unfair because a creature designed for the water is being judged by its inability to climb a tree.

The result? Urban students who grow up immersed in English media easily navigate the content. Meanwhile, rural and indigenous students face a double barrier. They are not just wrestling with English grammar, which is a challenge in itself, they were forced to comprehend completely alien concepts such as snowboarding, autumn leaves, and other British festivals.

Nevertheless, there is always light at the end of the tunnel. As language teachers, we are the ones who should make the change. We can use the textbooks as our guide, and we should because that is the set language policy, but it is our responsibility to scaffold our students by contextualizing the localization of the contents. By transforming these foreign concepts into familiar local experiences, we acknowledge that true fairness requires us to meet students where they are, rather than where the policy wishes them to be. **We should aim for justice, not equality.**

**Hence, to modernize Aristotle’s wisdom: the only
thing that is truly equal in equality is inequality.**

2K DAN KETIDAKADILAN PERLAKSANAAN

Dr. Yusma Fariza Yasin | Dr. Zulkifli Khair

Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan ke-4 (SDG4)

merujuk kepada **'Pendidikan berkualiti, saksama dan inklusif untuk semua'** sebagaimana yang telah diwartakan oleh pihak Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu (PBB). Namun pada realitinya, terdapat dua halangan besar yang menyebabkan peluang untuk mendapatkan pendidikan ini menjadi tidak adil dan berat sebelah, iaitu faktor kemiskinan dan kebencian. Kemiskinan merupakan halangan pendidikan yang paling asas dan telah berakar umbi sejak zaman-berzaman, malah sejak zaman nenek moyang lagi.

Pierre Bourdieu, seorang ahli sosiologi Perancis yang terkenal vokal dalam menyuarakan isu keadilan sosial, pernah menyatakan bahawa individu yang memiliki sumber ekonomi yang lebih baik mempunyai akses yang jauh lebih besar kepada peluang pendidikan dan pembangunan diri. Hal ini sekali gus seolah-olah menyokong frasa klise yang sering kedengaran dalam masyarakat kita, iaitu **'yang kaya bertambah kaya, yang papa bertambah papa'**.

Kanak-kanak daripada keluarga miskin, misalnya, terpaksa bekerja demi membantu kelangsungan hidup keluarga sehinggakan kini wujud lebih daripada 200 juta kanak-kanak miskin di seluruh dunia yang tidak dapat ke sekolah. Selain kekangan kewangan, ada pula kelompok yang sukar ke sekolah disebabkan oleh faktor geografi dan jarak yang terlalu jauh. Sebagai contoh, sebahagian anak-anak Orang Asli terpaksa berjalan kaki sehingga tiga jam semata-mata untuk sampai ke sekolah. Melihat kepada senario ini, sasaran 4.1 dalam SDG4 yang menggariskan kemudahan yuran, buku, dan pakaian seragam secara percuma serta saksama kelihatan bagaikan jauh panggang dari api.



Seterusnya, **'K' yang kedua pula ialah kebencian terhadap sesuatu bangsa, yang sangat sinonim dengan istilah 'apartheid'**. Sifat ini tercetus akibat rasa ego yang menebal dalam diri sesuatu kelompok yang menganggap kononnya bangsa mereka lebih mulia dan merupakan 'bangsa pilihan Tuhan'. Sebelum ini, ideologi kebencian sistematik ini pernah berlaku secara ketara di Amerika Syarikat dan Afrika Selatan, dan kini ia masih berterusan berlaku di wilayah Palestin dan Lubnan. Kebencian sistematik ini merujuk kepada penindasan kejam terhadap sesuatu bangsa atau kelompok tertentu sebagaimana yang sedang berlaku di Palestin dan Ukraine.

Sejak Oktober 2023, dilaporkan bahawa 100 peratus universiti di Gaza telah musnah menyembah bumi. Kemusnahan ini turut melibatkan ratusan bangunan sekolah, termasuklah sekolah-sekolah yang berada di bawah tajaan UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East). Impaknya, lebih daripada 600 ribu kanak-kanak kehilangan akses dan tidak dapat ke sekolah.

Malah, lebih menyedihkan apabila ramai kanak-kanak yang mati dibunuh sama ada akibat dibom, ditembak secara langsung, mati kelaparan, ditimpa penyakit, mahupun mati dihempap runtuh bangunan. Isu ini tidak hanya melibatkan kanak-kanak, bahkan mahasiswa kolej dan universiti juga tidak dapat meneruskan pengajian mereka. Ramai dalam kalangan pensyarah serta profesor mereka turut mati dibunuh atau dipenjarakan tanpa belas kasihan.

Gabungan antara kemiskinan dan kebencian ini akhirnya bertindak sebagai 'double penalty' (hukuman berganda) kepada mangsa, manakala pihak PBB pula dilihat bagai membisu dan dayus dalam memperjuangkan serta membela nasib mangsa fenomena kezaliman global ini.

Nah, melihat kepada ketidakadilan yang berlaku di luar sana, apakah bentuk sikap dan tindakan yang sepatutnya kita ambil selepas kita sendiri berpeluang 'mendapat pendidikan' yang sempurna?



EQUALITY/ INEQUALITY & THE POWER OF DISCOURSE

By Ungku Khairunnisa Ungku Mohd Nordin
(Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities).

When we think about equality and inequality, we tend to focus primarily on the more visible and measurable aspects of our lives, such as our income, education, and employment status. While these dimensions are undoubtedly important, equality and inequality are also heavily shaped by something far less visible yet equally influential: discourse. The way we communicate with each other on a daily basis, the stories we choose to share, and the specific voices we decide to listen to all play a major role in shaping whether we perceive ourselves or others as being treated fairly and truly accepted into our community.

From a discourse perspective, equality is not simply about providing everyone with the exact same set of opportunities. It is fundamentally about how each person is represented and recognized within the fabric of society. Discourse implicitly shapes what is considered normal, desirable, or valuable. Everyday communication (both verbal and nonverbal), media portrayals, and digital interactions all help determine which perspectives receive mainstream attention and which ones are pushed to the margins.

In today's digital world, the discourse surrounding equality and inequality has become increasingly complex. Digital media platforms have given individuals powerful new ways to express themselves and actively participate in public conversations. On the surface, this shift seems to promote greater equality because every single individual now has a platform and a voice. However, simply having a voice does not guarantee that you will actually be heard. Individuals or groups with greater digital literacy, more online connections, and a stronger online presence are far more likely to reach a broader audience and command a greater impact. Therefore, modern inequality often arises not from a lack of participation, but from who gets to have their voice heard - and how loudly.

Language itself can also be a significant source of inequality. When we assign labels to individuals and groups, those labels often carry deep-seated assumptions and expectations that dictate how people view them. For example, people may instantly judge others based on their linguistic abilities, educational background, or social identity.

This type of biased representation can inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes and unfair power relationships,

even when there is absolutely no conscious intention to discriminate.

Universities play a key role in helping students recognize the hidden dangers posed by these issues. As centres of knowledge, universities should encourage students and scholars alike to analyse how everyday discourse constructs our social realities. By fostering respectful discussion, critical thinking, and a genuine appreciation for diverse perspectives, universities help build more inclusive communities where differences are seen as valuable assets rather than obstacles. Ultimately, equality is not only a grand social objective but also a daily communicative practice. The language we use, the stories we tell, and the voices we choose to amplify will inevitably shape how our society perceives fairness and inclusion. By becoming more aware of discourse, we take a crucial initial step toward identifying subtle inequalities and working toward a more equal society for everyone.

Kesamarataan Akses, Ketidaksamarataan Pemahaman:

By Zaid bin Muhammad Shafie
(Akademi Bahasa, FSSH UTM)

Bagaimana Perbezaan Bahasa Di Media Sosial Membentuk Pelbagai Persepsi dan Naratif?

Apabila kita membincangkan berkaitan isu ketidaksamarataan di Malaysia,

kita seringkali melihat kepada aspek seperti jurang ekonomi, pendidikan, dan sosial. Namun, dalam dunia media sosial hari ini, wujud satu bentuk ketidaksamarataan yang sangat ketara tetapi jarang diketengahkan, iaitu ketidaksamarataan penyebaran maklumat yang dipengaruhi oleh kepelbagaian bahasa. Malaysia ialah sebuah negara berbilang bangsa and bahasa. Keunikan ini telah lama dinikmati serta menjadi kekuatan tersendiri yang tidak ada pada negara lain. Akan tetapi, tanpa sedar, kepelbagaian bahasa ini telah mencetuskan ketidaksamarataan dalam penyebaran maklumat di media sosial akibat penggunaan bahasa penyampai yang berbeza. Hal ini menyebabkan sebahagian isu penting tidak mendapat perhatian yang sama rata oleh semua kaum di Malaysia.

Sebagai contoh, **isu terkini berkaitan pelarian Rohingya sedang hangat dibicarakan dalam media sosial**. Isu ini dilihat mendapat perhatian dan kebimbangan yang mendalam tentang masalah sosial yang banyak ditimbulkan oleh golongan ini. Walaubagaimanapun, rata-rata rasa kebimbangan ini hanya dapat didengari dalam lingkungan Melayu sahaja. Sebaliknya, isu ini tidak mendapat perhatian yang sama dalam kalangan bukan Melayu. Isu sepenting ini sepatutnya diberi perhatian yang sama rata dalam kalangan masyarakat Malaysia kerana melibatkan kedaulatan negara.

Selain itu, isu lain yang turut mendapat perhatian rakyat Malaysia adalah **isu pengiktirafan peperiksaan UEC di Malaysia**. Isu ini mendapat perhatian yang banyak daripada pelbagai lapisan masyarakat, namun jika diamati naratif yang dibawa oleh pengguna media sosial adalah berbeza. Masyarakat bukan Cina menentang kepada pengiktirafan ini kerana dipercayai menggugat dasar Pendidikan Negara. Lain pula perbincangan dalam kalangan Cina, mereka lebih percaya isu ini adalah permainan politik demi meraih undian namun turut tidak menafikan kepentingan Dasar Pendidikan Negara.

Sebagai seorang pendidik bahasa, saya melihat **isu ketidaksamarataan ini sebagai sebuah titik tolak agar pembelajaran bahasa bukan sekadar untuk mendapatkan pekerjaan atau mencapai kecemerlangan akademik semata-mata**. Malah, menguasai bahasa lain mampu membuka pintu kepada pengalaman serta perspektif masyarakat yang berbeza. Bahasa membolehkan kita menyeberangi sempadan kaum dan memahami realiti yang mungkin tidak kelihatan dalam lingkungan bahasa kita sendiri.

Beralih kepada isu yang melibatkan masyarakat India pula, antaranya **isu rumah ibadat di tanah tanpa geran yang sah**. Masyarakat India melihat isu ini berpunca daripada zaman British lagi, dimana kebanyakan penempatan India didirikan didalam kawasan ladang estet. Setelah itu, kawasan ladang ini diambil alih oleh Kerajaan dan sebahagiannya dibeli oleh pemaju sewasta. Kerana tidak cakna tentang birokrasi pemilikan tanah yang sah, isu ini telah meleret sehingga menjadi tular baru-baru ini. Semestinya naratif sebenar ini tidak mendapat perhatian daripada masyarakat bukan India, malah maklumat yang telah disampaikan dalam bahasa yang berbeza tidak mencerminkan perihai sejarah dan fakta yang benar.

Akibat ketidaksamarataan penyebaran informasi ini, **kita seolah-olah hidup di bawah satu bumbung yang sama tetapi memperoleh maklumat yang berbeza**. Kita membaca berita yang berlainan, mengikuti perdebatan yang berlainan, dan memberi perhatian kepada isu yang berlainan.

WHAT MACHINES CAN'T DO:

HUMAN UNIQUENESS IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Nor Akmar Nordin & Faqryza Mardeyah Ab Latif

In 2024, when I was the organiser of a program called Psychology Insight with the theme of Artificial Intelligence, a final year student asked me **"is it possible that in the future the career of a psychologist will be taken over by AI"**. A few days later I met him in a program for certification for the management of disabled workers. He had acted out a role play to show empathy for a worker who used a wheelchair. After the role play I approached him and said **"this is the function of a psychologist that cannot be taken over by AI"**.

While artificial intelligence exhibits impressive capabilities, **such as processing large datasets at breakneck speeds, automating repetitive tasks, and providing tailored recommendations, its limitations are equally evident.** Much of what we laypeople call **"AI"** refers to generative AI, which is actually a large language model (LLM) that extracts and regurgitates vast amounts of knowledge originally produced by us. AI lacks the ability for true creativity, which is anchored in lived experience rather than combinational logic, and it remains reliant on the quality of its data, frequently reproducing the biases encoded within it.

Artificial intelligence has permeated every aspect of contemporary life, changing not only the landscape of organisations and industries, but also the very grain of our daily activities. Machines, such as generative models and predictive algorithms, now carry out activities that were previously believed to require human intelligence. However, this technological revolution evokes a crucial question: What remains uniquely human? The answer, of course, lies in the very attributes that make us human - like creativity, ethics, empathy, and consciousness that no computer can duplicate other than in speed or efficiency.



AI systems

in hybrid workplaces may track performance and forecast burnout, but no algorithm can truly empathise with a person experiencing stress. The capacity of a manager to listen, acknowledge emotions, and offer genuine support is invaluable. Emotional intelligence - the ability to comprehend and react to emotions - is still a uniquely human ability that maintains trust and morale.

Similarly, generative AI can produce music or art, but it lacks cultural context. No machine can duplicate the layers of significance, history, identity, and emotion found in traditional poetry or indigenous artwork. Culture is a live manifestation of individuality because human creators infuse their creations with memory, effort, and joy.

AI diagnostic tools are increasingly accurate, but when facing ethical dilemmas such as end-of-life care, human judgment remains indispensable. Doctors and families weigh compassion, dignity, and moral responsibility in ways that transcend data. You can hold a human being accountable for their decisions, but you cannot do the same with a machine.

LLMs should be seen as a partner that amplifies our strengths, not a competitor that replaces them. In the end, what machines can't do is precisely what makes us human. In the age of artificial intelligence, our greatest responsibility is to live fully into that uniqueness, ensuring that progress in technology is always matched by progress in humanity.



Most importantly, machines are unable to exhibit moral responsibility or empathy. What sets us apart is not just intelligence, but also imagination. **Humans create meaning from the chaos of our world, weaving stories, art, and ideas that go beyond utility.** We act with empathy, choosing compassion even when logic suggests otherwise.

The Squeezed Middle: Redefining Equality in the Age of Subsidy Rationalization

By Abdullah Mohd Nawi

When we discuss the theme of equality versus inequality,

Our minds are often drawn toward the extremes - that huge gap between the heirs of Megah Holdings who travel on private jets and inherit their parents' mega corporations, and those who can barely afford to eat a decent meal. However, rarely is the spotlight brought to those living in the gap, squeezed between these two extremes. Those who are not rich enough to be considered truly wealthy, and not poor enough to be classified as poor.

The recent paradigm shift in Malaysia's fuel subsidy policies, marked by the introduction of targeted mechanisms like the BUDI Madani program and MyKad-enforced fuel caps, has ignited a fierce national conversation. Vertical equity, as seen by the government elites, dictates that aid should go to those who need it most, not to mention being a measure to reduce smuggling, plug fuel leakage, and to reduce the national debt. However, the government cannot create something out of nothing. Money has to be taken from

somewhere in order for it to be passed somewhere else. Say thank you to the sandwiched middle class, who pay the bulk of the taxes to line the nation's coffers.

For the Malaysian middle class,

the narrative of "targeted equity" often feels less like economic justice and more like an uneven burden. They are the ones who diligently contribute to personal income taxes and absorb the immediate shocks of expanded consumption taxes like the Sales and Service Tax (SST).

Yet, when the government distributes these targeted subsidies, the middle class finds itself caught in an unforgiving paradox: deemed "too rich" to qualify for substantial government aid, but "too poor" to comfortably weather the cascading cost of living. They do not qualify for much of the subsidies and aid in many sectors, with more and more talk of removing the ones they do qualify for, as the country finds itself in trouble trying to keep up with rising financial demands.

The Paradox of Equality

At the moment of writing this article, it would appear that focus has shifted for a while from removing fuel subsidies. However, this does not mean that we are safe. What has been brought up once will be brought up again at a later date when it is relatively less politically damaging. **So what does this mean for us? Is the sandwiched middle class really undeserving of even this amount of subsidy from the government that it pays taxes to?**

It is undeniable that the lower income classes require more aid, but at the same time, if the source it takes this surplus from is taken from a class who have sacrificed and worked hard to achieve some semblance of a comfortable life, it would negate all the hard work that they have done, and all the contribution that they have poured into the country's coffers through their hard earned tax dollars. **Where would equity be then?**

Equity should not mean just the redistribution of wealth according to income. It should go beyond the usual metrics, and also consider how much the individual is already contributing to the country. It should consider the effort and sacrifice each individual has paid to be able to reap the benefits of their labour. It needs to consider who is truly deserving, and who is just lying about, waiting for a payout.

The biggest question is how.

Unfortunately, that magic formula is still well out of our reach.

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Equality VS Inequality. The World Cup as a Mirror of Global Society.





THE FIFA WORLD CUP.

Introduction:

“The FIFA World Cup”

is often described as the
greatest sporting event on earth.

Capturing the attention of billions across diverse cultures and economies. For 90 minutes on the pitch, nations compete under identical rules with a singular objective. This year marks the 23rd edition, held across 16 cities in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Expanded to 48 countries across six continents, this five-week tournament from 11 June to 19 July 2026 searches for the greatest team in football history.

Beyond the celebrations, the tournament highlights the complex relationship between equality and inequality. While it provides a stage where talent can overcome limitations, it simultaneously exposes stark disparities in wealth, resources, and opportunities. True equality requires more than simply allowing participation; it demands creating an environment where everyone has a fair opportunity to succeed.

Equality of Opportunity: The Foundation of the World Cup Spirit

One of the strongest messages of the tournament is equal opportunity - the belief that success is earned through ability, teamwork, and determination. A smaller nation can challenge a football powerhouse through collective effort. For instance, Curaçao made its debut in the 2026 World Cup after qualifying in the CONCACAF zone, despite having a population of only 156,000 compared to defending champion Argentina's 46 million. Similarly, in 2018, South Korea shocked the world by beating Germany 2-0, defying all betting odds. These moments remind us that football is not solely about financial power or reputation, but about courage and strategy, showing that potential should not be restricted by geography.

Inequality in Resources: The Gap Behind the Competition

Although teams compete on the same pitch, they do not begin from the same starting point. Football development requires heavy investment. Wealthier nations boast advanced training facilities, sports science support, and professional academies at iconic venues like Santiago Bernabéu or the Allianz Arena, creating competitive environments that foster top talent.

Conversely, developing nations face limited infrastructure, a lack of funding, and fewer qualified coaches. Curaçao, for example, had a 2025 Gross Domestic Product of just 3 billion USD. While they managed to qualify through sheer talent, imagine their potential with equal facilities. This creates a paradox where equality exists in the rules, but massive inequality remains in the preparation.

Diversity and Inclusion: Football as a Global Language

The World Cup also demonstrates how diversity can unite humanity as supporters mix peacefully, celebrating shared emotions. True equality means respecting differences and ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to contribute. This diversity is mirrored in the players themselves, such as Spain's rising star Lamine Yamal. Born to a Moroccan father and an Equatorial Guinean mother who worked tirelessly in the service sector, Yamal joined La Masia Academy at seven and debuted for the first team at 15. At just 19 years old in 2026, he stands as a key player on the world stage, proving that success can come from anywhere when opportunities are accessible.



Inequality in Recognition, Media, and Influence

Inequality also manifests in media coverage and commercial influence. Traditional football giants and global icons like Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi dominate the spotlight, creating a commercial cycle where successful teams secure more resources, leaving smaller nations struggling to gain exposure. A balanced football ecosystem requires the recognition of talent regardless of nationality or economic status, as every athlete who reaches this stage has made immense sacrifices.

The World Cup as a Platform for Social Change

Beyond sport, the tournament influences discussions on fairness and inclusion. Geopolitical crises often spill onto the pitch, as seen in this edition's US-Iran match highlights. Due to strict travel restrictions, the Iranian squad was denied base-camp visas, forcing them to camp in Tijuana, Mexico, and commute across the border for matches in Los Angeles and Seattle. Despite this inequality, the players maintained sportsmanship, marching onto the field holding hands with American children. This reminds us that football must transcend geopolitical conflicts. True progress requires investing in grassroots initiatives. In Malaysia, academies like the National Football Development Programme (NFDP) use football as a tool for social mobility, teaching resilience and equality to give children a fair shot at life.

Conclusion

The World Cup is a mirror reflecting both equality and inequality. It provides a common stage under uniform rules but reveals vastly different realities behind each team's journey. While my prediction for the top eight focuses on developed nations like England, the Netherlands, Germany, and Japan due to their infrastructure investments, the ultimate goal of sport - and society - should be to build a world where everyone has a genuinely fair chance to compete.

EMOJI MEANS WHAT?

Exploring Equality & Inequality in Emoji Communication

By Dr. Noor Khairin Nawwarah binti Khalid
(Language Academy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities)

“ *Equal access to communication
does not always guarantee equal understanding.* ”

I imagine receiving a thumbs-up 👍 emoji from your lecturer after sending an important message. Would you see it as an acknowledgement, encouragement, or as something else entirely? To the lecturer, he or she meant “message received” or “good job”. However, the university student felt dismissed after receiving the message, believing the lecturer was uninterested in continuing the conversation. The same emoji carried two very different meanings, and this misunderstanding demonstrates the fascinating reality of emoji communication.

Although emojis are widely viewed as tools that connect people across cultures, ages, and backgrounds, they can also reveal significant differences or inequalities in how people create and understand meaning. It is difficult to imagine today’s digital communication without emojis, as they are a central part of our daily communication. We use them to chat with our friends, react to colleagues’ messages, and to quickly and conveniently respond to social media posts. A smiling face 😊, a heart ❤️, or a laughing face 😂 can easily convey feelings that words alone may struggle to capture. They can also act as a shortcut for expressing feelings that might otherwise require lengthy expressions.

At first glance, **this shows emojis create an equal form of communication for people across different languages and cultures.** A Malaysian student, a Japanese tourist, and an American businessperson may all recognise a smiling face emoji. Yet, shared recognition of an emoji is not the same as agreeing on what it means. We should always remember that people’s interpretation is shaped by their local values, cultural norms, and personal experiences.

“
What seems
simple and
natural to one
group may
appear
awkward to
another.”

In addition to that, meanings attached to emojis also vary across generations. The author believes that there are times when we receive an emoji but are confused about whether we understood it correctly. A good example of this situation is the “**face with tears of joy**” 😂 emoji. For many millennials, it remains the go-to symbol for laughter. However, among younger users such as Generation Z, the skull emoji 💀 is being used to convey the same meaning. For millennials, this emoji means death or scary things, but **Gen Z** sees it as “**I am laughing so hard I am dead**”. Some people may see this as a minor difference, but it can easily lead to misunderstanding. This variation shows that equal access and usage of communication tools may not necessarily guarantee equal understanding. What seems simple and natural to one group may appear awkward to another. This reminds us that emojis are never as universal as they first appear.

Another key aspect of the equality and inequality debate surrounding emojis is representation. Over the years, we can see the changes made by emoji developers to ensure gender equality and the representation of minority groups in social media applications such as WhatsApp or Facebook. They have introduced **diverse skin tones** 🍌👍👉, **gender options** 🧑🧒🧒, and disability-related emojis 🦯🦻🦿. The expansion of emojis also includes cultural and religious representation. For the author, **the woman wearing a headscarf** 🧕 emoji provides a way for many **Muslim women to express aspects of their identity online**. While it may not erase all the discrimination and negative stereotypes faced by Muslim women's communities, this contributes to greater visibility and recognition of Islam and Muslims in digital spaces.

One of the most interesting lessons that the author learned from her academic and professional experiences, and continues to share with her students today, is that communication is rarely as simple or small as it seems. One emoji can create a connection, express emotion, or unintentionally cause a misunderstanding. Emojis in digital communication may look universal, but their interpretation depends on the readers' experiences, generational differences, cultural backgrounds, and social contexts.

In some ways, perhaps these differences are what make emojis so interesting. They remind us that communication is not only about what we say and write. It is also about how others understand it. The next time we use an emoji, take a moment to consider the meanings of the selected emoji, since it may carry meanings beyond our intention. Remember, the next time we send a simple 😊 or 👍, it may be communicating much more than we realise.

Hello!



OMG



 ***You***



Sorry



Nice!



Hi!

***LOL***

Cool!!!



THX



TRUST
(COMMUNITY)

CERTIFIED
(ASSURANCE)

HALAL NUTRITION *Is Trust Enough?*

By Dr. Fahrul Irfan bin Ishak
(Academy of Islamic Civilization, FSSH)

**“As a Malaysian Muslim,
I have often wondered
about a simple yet
profound question:”**

How exactly do we decide whether the food we eat is truly halal? Malaysia is globally recognized as one of the undisputed leaders in halal certification. Our national halal standards are highly respected internationally, and the thriving halal industry contributes billions of ringgit to our economy every single year. Yet, despite these massive institutional achievements, **many Muslims still heavily rely on personal trust rather than official certification when choosing where to eat.**

Think about our daily routines. Many of us routinely buy breakfast from a roadside stall, have lunch at a busy local food court, or visit a bustling night market on the weekend. Rarely do we ever stop to ask whether the food being served is officially halal-certified. Instead, we see that the owner is a fellow Muslim, briefly observe the cleanliness of the surroundings, and instinctively assume the food is safe and halal. For the vast majority of consumers, that baseline level of community trust is completely enough.

This reliance raises an interesting question: if formal halal certification exists to provide absolute assurance, why do so many people continue to depend so deeply on personal trust? Perhaps it is because trust has long been deeply embedded as a core part of our local community culture.

We collectively believe that fellow Muslims thoroughly understand their religious obligations and would never intentionally serve questionable or compromised food. At the same time, a growing distinction is emerging between what may be called **"trusted halal"** and **"certified halal."** Both may technically be halal, but the actual level of structural verification differs significantly. Consumers who purchase certified products benefit from a strictly recognized system of professional inspection and continuous monitoring. On the other hand, those who rely solely on trust must depend largely on their own personal judgment. The underlying issue here is not whether one method is inherently right and the other is wrong, but whether all consumers are receiving the exact same level of assurance.

Another major challenge concerns national food security. Although Malaysia is undeniably a global halal success story, we still depend heavily on imported food ingredients and various foreign agricultural products. This systemic dependence raises critical questions about whether equal access to halal nutrition can be fully guaranteed in the future if key food resources remain entirely outside of our domestic control.

Furthermore, some people mistakenly view halal requirements as a subtle form of cultural or social exclusion. Yet, modern halal standards are not only about strict religious compliance. They fundamentally emphasize pristine hygiene, robust safety, high quality, complete traceability, and ethical practices—universal values that are deeply appreciated by consumers of all cultural and religious backgrounds.

Ultimately, halal is not merely about logos, stamps, or labels. It is about building consumer confidence, ensuring corporate transparency, and promoting systemic fairness. In a modern society that truly values equality, every single consumer deserves equal access to food that is completely safe, deeply nutritious, and thoroughly trustworthy.



KETIKA ISLAM MERUNTUHKAN HIERARKI MANUSIA:

Oleh: Talhah Ajmain (Akademi Tamadun Islam, FSSH)

BUKTI KESETARAAN DALAM SIRAH

Sebelum fajar Islam menyingsing, masyarakat Jahiliah telah membina tembok tebal yang memisahkan darjat sesama manusia bukan berdasarkan akhlak, tetapi bersandarkan keturunan, warna kulit, dan kekayaan material semata-mata. Pada zaman tersebut, seorang hamba tidak akan pernah dianggap setara dengan tuannya, manakala orang asing pula dipandang rendah serta tidak akan setara dengan orang Arab asli. Itulah "hukum" tidak bertulis yang mereka pegang erat secara turun-temurun, sehinggalah Islam datang dan meruntuhkan tembok diskriminasi tersebut buat selama-lamanya.

Bukti kesetaraan ini dapat dilihat dengan jelas menerusi pengiktirafan Islam terhadap para sahabat tanpa mengira asal-usul mereka.

Bilal bin Rabah RA bukan sahaja seorang hamba, malah beliau merupakan seorang hamba berkulit hitam dari Habsyah yang disiksa dengan kejam di atas pasir membara semata-mata kerana memilih untuk beriman kepada Tuhan yang Esa.

Namun, Islam tidak melihat warna kulitnya, melainkan melihat kesucian jiwanya. Beliau akhirnya diangkat menjadi muazzin; suaranya yang pernah dicekik kini bergema memanggil seluruh umat ke hadapan Allah, bukan kerana faktor keturunan atau kekayaan, tetapi kerana nilai "takwa". Selain itu, Salman al-Farisi RA datang dari Parsi tanpa latar belakang suku Arab yang dikenali, manakala Suhaib al-Rumi RA pula berasal dari Rom sebagai tawanan perang. Di bawah panji sistem lain, mereka akan kekal dianggap sebagai "orang luar". Bagaimanapun, Rasulullah SAW mengangkat darjat Salman dengan bersabda: "Salman adalah sebahagian daripada kami, Ahli Bait," yang membuktikan bahawa status keluarga ini terbina melalui takwa, bukannya hubungan darah.



Realiti praktikal ini amat mengejutkan akal masyarakat Jahiliah apabila melihat tokoh-tokoh bangsawan dan pemimpin yang sangat dihormati seperti Abu Bakar RA dan Umar al-Khattab RA duduk bersama-sama dalam satu majlis dengan Bilal, Salman, dan Suhaib sebagai saudara yang setara tanpa sebarang perbezaan darjat. Di hadapan Islam, perbezaan usia dan latar belakang lebur begitu sahaja; mereka berdiri di barisan yang sama kerana ukhuwah bukanlah sekadar slogan kosmetik, melainkan satu realiti hidup yang dipraktikkan secara nyata.

**Baginda menegaskan:
"Demi Allah, sekiranya
Fatimah binti Muhammad
mencuri, nescaya
Muhammad akan
memotong tangannya".**

Selain kesetaraan sosial, Islam turut menegakkan keadilan tanpa kompromi di hadapan hukum. Apabila seorang wanita bangsawan daripada suku Bani Makhzum didapati mencuri, ada pihak yang cuba memohon pengampunan khusus untuknya demi menjaga nama baik kedudukannya. Rasulullah SAW bangkit dengan tegas dan mengingatkan bahawa kehancuran umat terdahulu berpunca daripada penguatkuasaan hukum yang berat sebelah - iaitu membiarkan orang mulia yang mencuri tetapi menegakkan hukuman ke atas orang yang lemah.

Kisah-kisah agung ini membuktikan bahawa gagasan kesetaraan (equality) bukanlah idea moden Barat yang baharu, melainkan fitrah murni yang telah diajarkan oleh Islam sejak 1,400 tahun yang lalu, jauh sebelum ia menjadi wacana akademik atau manifesto politik. Islam sama sekali tidak menilai manusia berdasarkan faktor geografi tanah air, bahasa, atau harta benda yang dimiliki.

**Sebagaimana firman Allah SWT
dalam Surah al-Hujurat ayat 13
yang bermaksud:**

**"Sesungguhnya semulia-mulia
kamu di sisi Allah ialah orang
yang lebih taqwanya di antara kamu".**

**Inilah manifestasi rahmat sebenar yang meletakkan
semua manusia duduk sama rendah, berdiri sama
tinggi.**



EQUALITY vs INEQUALITY

An Islamic Perspective

By: Azah Atikah Anwar Batcha
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Studies on Islam, Science, and Civilization -
RZS CASIS, FSSH)

The world we live in is inherently full of differences. Some people spend their lives in comfortable homes with absolute ease, while others face a grueling daily struggle just to secure food, shelter, and basic education. Some children grow up surrounded by books and endless opportunities, while others have to walk immense distances - or even swim - just to reach their classrooms. When reflecting on these stark everyday scenarios of equality and inequality, it is highly insightful to examine them through the timeless lens of Islam.

As Muslims, we deeply understand that the worldly life is not designed to make every single individual identical in social status, material wealth, or life conditions. Instead, God has intentionally created a rich variety among people as a profound manifestation of His divine wisdom. While some are given an abundance of provision, others are given significantly less. Crucially, this worldly inequality is never a sign of superior human worth, but rather a functional test of gratitude, patience, and personal accountability.

One of the true beauties of Islam is that it teaches that ultimate equality resides not in material circumstances, but in fundamental human dignity and spiritual worth.

No specific race, skin color, or inherited social status makes one person inherently better than another. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) clearly stated that superiority is only based on piety, righteousness, and a deep awareness of God.

The Qur'an also explicitly indicates this core truth in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13.

However, this is not to say that God condones the sufferings of the global ummah or looks kindly upon those who oppress others. On the contrary, Islam strongly commands justice and absolute fairness. While natural gaps in authority, wealth, and capability will always exist, systemic oppression and exploitation are completely forbidden. Those who are blessed with more are directly responsible for uplifting others through charity, kindness, and active support. This continuous circle of giving helps balance society and significantly reduces the socioeconomic harm caused by raw inequality.

In Islam, even a simple smile directed at another person is beautifully considered an act of charity. **But a word of advice: if you happen to be a billionaire or a millionaire, please do not make your entire philanthropy strategy just "smile and wave" at people!** It is essential to truly know who you are, recognize your real capacity, acknowledge the vast blessings entrusted to you, and remember the ultimate accountability you will answer for.

Ultimately, **the interplay of equality versus inequality in Islam puts forth the understanding that these differences are meant to build deep compassion within the human family.**

Through this divine design, the wealthy learn genuine gratitude and active generosity, while the poor cultivate patience and absolute trust in God. Communities naturally remain stronger when people care for one another, and when collective resources are channeled into good use with unwavering integrity. Islam does not promote a forced, absolute equality in worldly matters, but it passionately champions justice, mercy, and dignity for all. People may differ in their temporary circumstances, but they are completely equal in value before God. **In the end, what truly matters is how sincerely we follow the path of righteousness.**

