

Values and Their Relationship to Social Problems in Malaysia: An Islamic Framework

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Abstract

This study analyzes the relationship between values and social problems for Malaysian teenagers. Malaysia has undergone a tremendous social transformation that has affected many of its traditional and religious values and norms. This development is said to have contributed to a rise in social problems. Our basic premises are that values are reflected by behavior and that religion plays an important role in Malaysians' value formation. In this context, and since Islam is Malaysia's official religion, the measurement of values is based on the works of al-Ghazali and Rokeach.¹ Some suggestions also are provided for future development policies.

Background of the Study

In 1991, the Malaysian government announced a 30-year "Vision 2020" target of making Malaysia a developed nation not only in the economic aspect, but also in the political, social, spiritual, and cultural aspects. While

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economic success (till the 1998 crisis) has been commendable, the rising rate of social problems, particularly among Malaysian teenagers, has received attention from many quarters.

In response to the sudden reported increase in the number of reported cases of drug addiction and other problems, especially among teenagers, many suggestions and recommendations have been made. These range from greater parental control to the reintroduction of public caning in schools as well as stiffer fines and penalties. These methods may have short-term benefits, but more long-term, concerted, and definite strategies need to be formulated in order to address the root problem.

This study is based on the premise that values play a very central role in solving these problems; hence, teenagers' values must be studied. Unfortunately, there are no substantial studies to date that provide such data or examine the relationship of values with deviant behavior that contribute to social problems. However, studies from the conventional perspective on values have been conducted in other countries. For example, Cohen and Cohen investigated the normative ideals and goals of American youths and whether community, school, family, and peers correlate with their ideals and goals.² Rokeach formulated a measure of values and tested it on a sample of American adults.³ As Malaysia tries to achieve Vision 2020's goals, a similarly comprehensive study needs to be undertaken.

In addition, for Muslim social scientists and development policy-makers who are eager to study the relationship between values and social problems, as well as their relationship to development from an Islamic perspective, providing Islamic interpretations to problems must be accompanied by analytical frameworks that reflect an Islamic worldview. Those who propose that religion is still an important social institution must prove this by developing and utilizing benchmarks or standards that reflect religious perspectives.

In the Malaysian context, we maintain that religion is still an important factor in determining people's values. Therefore, it seems logical to use a framework derived from and reflective of Malaysia's situation. As no such framework exists, we have tried to develop one by using the works of al-Ghazali, a major influence on Islam in Malaysia, to represent the universal values found in all major religions. Although preliminary in nature, we attempt to transform the values, prescriptions, and principles mentioned in his works into a benchmark to analyze teenagers' values.

Values and Value Systems

In this study, values are seen as the basis, criteria, or standard in terms of which evaluations are made. Values are multifaceted standards that guide conduct in a variety of ways.⁴ They lead us to take particular positions on social issues and predispose us to favor one political or religious ideology over another. In addition, they are standards to guide presentations of the self to others and to evaluate and judge. Furthermore, values are central to the study of comparison processes; standards employed to agree or challenge others' values; and standards that tell us how to rationalize, in the psychoanalytic sense, beliefs, attitudes, and actions that otherwise would be personally and socially unacceptable.

If values are all of the above, we see that different values and value systems are possible, depending on their sources and interpretations. In cases where religion is still a major source of values, whether personal or social, the meaning, ordering, and priority of values probably would differ from a case in which religion no longer plays a significant role in shaping values. This point should be kept in mind when we develop an Islamic framework of values.

Values can be divided into two categories: instrumental (mean) and terminal (end). In other words, we can have values that are "the means to the ends" and values that are "the ends" themselves. For example, happiness is a terminal value, while the values in which we believe, hold, and practice to achieve happiness are instrumental. One example of an instrumental value is helping others. Terminal and instrumental values can be further subdivided. Terminal values can be classified according to whether they are individual (intrapersonal) or social (interpersonal) values. To continue the example above, happiness is an individual terminal value, whereas brotherhood is a social (instrumental) value.

In conventional studies, instrumental values also can be classified as either moral or competence values. Whereas the former refers to modes of behavior and usually involves an interpersonal focus, the latter has a more personal focus and refers to characteristics for which an individual should strive to achieve. According to Rokeach, violating the former arouses "pangs of conscience or feelings of guilt," while violating the latter leads to feelings of shame about personal inadequacy.⁵ He further states that "behaving honestly and responsibly leads one to feel that he is behaving morally, whereas behaving logically, intelligently or imaginatively leads one to feel that he is behaving competently."

This demarcation between moral and competence values may not be as clear-cut in an Islamic framework, where one is expected to behave morally in interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, and, more importantly, in one's relationship with God. Hence, it is possible to be unjust to oneself if one does not adhere to the values prescribed in the Shari'ah. There is no simple one-to-one relationship or connection between the two kinds of terminal and instrumental values. Nevertheless, establishing, clarifying, and understanding individual and social values are very important, given the central role of values in human life.

In addition to being the standards upon which the evaluation is based, values play a motivational function by guiding peoples' actions in daily situations as well as serve as the foundations of long-term development. If we behave in accordance with our instrumental values, we will be rewarded with the end states specified by our terminal values. If we clearly understand our end goals (which are in many ways less prone to change), then it will be possible for us to prescribe the relevant instrumental values (including actions) that will lead us to our end goals.

In societies that have been adversely affected by secularization, the choice of end goals is more easily changeable, since all values are deemed to be transient. In societies where religion is still a strong component that directs and guides life, the ends have to be valid and, equally important, the means have to be correct and proper. The ends certainly cannot justify the means. This is the case in Islam. If individuals and society have instrumental values that are not conducive to attaining end values, then remedial action can be taken. If individuals and society do not have the prescribed end values must be addressed first.

Rokeach considers a person a "system of values" rather than a "cluster of traits" (i.e., character), for the former allows the possibility that the person can be changed by changing social conditions, whereas traits and character are more adverse to change.⁶ While this may be true for contemporary western studies, this has not been the case in the works of past scholars, whether in the East or the West. For example, in the works of al-Ghazali, which will be used as the basis of our framework in this study, character or "qualities of the soul" are the main focus. This may not necessarily pose a major problem in our study, as it is proposed that under "character" we can assign a system of values (both end but especially instrumental values) for each of the traits deemed to be preferable. These values then can be measured and, if found wanting, remedied.

Values, Character Traits, and Religion in al-Ghazali's Writings⁷

According to al-Ghazali (d. 1111), eleventh-century Baghdad and Damascus experienced moral degradation. Hence his concern for ethics and character traits. He defined ethics as “a study of certain religious beliefs (*i`tiqadat*) and of the rightness and wrongness of action for the purpose of practice and not for the sake of mere knowledge.”⁸ A great deal of emphasis was placed on behavior/action. Therefore, he considered the starting point of talking about behavior (and attitudes and values) to be humanity.

While each person has a physical body, in the Islamic framework one's essence is the soul. The soul uses the body as a vehicle to acquire provisions for this world, but ultimately for the eternal afterlife. In the most general terms, these provisions consist of knowledge and action. Humanity was created to serve God and, as God's vicegerent on Earth, is entrusted with utilizing all other creations in the best way possible. All human actions, done consciously, willingly, and in line with the Shari'ah are considered acts of worship (*`ibadah*), the *raison d'être* of creation. To know what actions to do, people need to acquire knowledge so that their actions may become *provisions* for a successful eternal life in the Hereafter.

Character traits and action/behavior are interrelated in a circular fashion. Every act affects the soul, provided it is done with intention and knowledge. These acts form the soul's qualities. Continuous acts establish these qualities in the soul. If a quality is thus established, a relevant bodily action necessarily proceeds from it. An established state of the soul is termed *character*. Hence, good actions lead to good character, which in turn, naturally produces good actions. In ethics, this is called the interaction theory.

A deed affects the soul, and repeating the deed strengthens the soul's quality. As good acts/behavior are needed for the soul to acquire good qualities, specific actions (e.g., praying, giving zakat, and fasting) are prescribed and others are prohibited (e.g., gambling and consuming intoxicants). This is why Qur'an 29:45 states that prayer is a shield that prevents us from doing evil things (*munkar*).

According to al-Ghazali, action or behavior can be analyzed at four levels: those directed toward God, fellow human beings, other members of creation, and one's self. While all action ultimately is related to the first level, in many ways character traits are far more related to the fourth category (i.e., purifying the soul from vice and beautifying it with virtue). Certainly, good actions toward other human beings and members of cre-

ation also lead to self-development. The ultimate aim of conscious good actions is to create good character, which, in turn, produces good action and achieves happiness in the Hereafter.

Provisions to Attain Happiness. To attain happiness (in this world and the next), a Muslim's end goal, al-Ghazali identifies four categories of goods or means (*wasail*) that can be considered as categories of terminal values in the conventional sense. For the purpose of value studies, we must accept from the outset that Islam does not regard all categories as equally important. Just as values "predispose us to favor one particular position over another," al-Ghazali's view prioritizes these categories as goods of the soul (*al-fada'il al-nafsiyah*), goods of the body (*al-fada'il al-jismiyyah*), external goods (*al-fada'il al-kharijiyyah*), and goods of divine grace (*al-fada'il al-tawfiqiyah*).

GOODS OF THE SOUL. Al-Ghazali reduces this most important category to two factors: faith or knowledge (of revelation and practical religion) and good character (having all the good qualities of the soul [e.g., the moderate positions of the soul's faculties, such as wisdom, temperance, courage, justice, and their subqualities]). The latter is attainable only through good actions. Hence, one could summarize the category further as consisting of knowledge and action.

GOODS OF THE BODY. This category is essential, but lower in rank than the first, and consists of health, strength, long life, beauty, and similar goods. These goods are seen to be physiological means that help one attain knowledge and perform good actions. Therefore while they are essential, they are not in and of themselves the goal.

EXTERNAL GOODS. This category, which is not essential but is useful for attaining happiness, is less important than the second category. Its goods include, for example, wealth, influence, family, and noble birth. While wealth is useful to attain good health, which is important in performing our *'ibadah*, it must be seen only as a means to achieve another means. This is probably one of the most important distinctions in the Islamic view of prioritization, where material welfare is not the end-all of development policy. In terms of contemporary society and in the light of Malaysia's rapid economic growth, this issue is an important point. We will analyze it in our study.

GOODS OF DIVINE GRACE. These goods cannot be earned, but rather are given by God to whom He pleases. They include divine guidance (*hidayah*), divine direction (*rushd*), divine leadership (*tasdid*), and divine strengthening (*ta'id*). Thus, people must perform their obligations with correct knowledge, intention, and in the correct way, while always hoping for God's divine grace.

To summarize the above categories and their relationship, al-Ghazali says that:

[T]he primary means of happiness are the goods of the soul, and man can only acquire them with the help of bodily goods and external goods, should he be given goods of grace. He will acquire them through effort and action, i.e., through constant practice and habituation, and also through association with the virtuous.¹⁰

From this, it is clear that the correct ranking of categories for one seeking to attain happiness would be goods of the soul, followed by goods of the body and external goods.

Islam has a very clear position that Muslims (and all human beings) must strive to better themselves in this world. The issue here is that how we satisfy our bodily and external needs has to be guided by Islam's guidelines. Therefore, any study of human behavior and values has to rank terminal values as superior, and problems, whether individual or social, have to refer to this framework.

Knowledge and Action in Attaining Happiness

Al-Ghazali stresses the twin requirements of knowledge (*ilm*) and action (*amal*) in the pursuit of happiness. One without the other is insufficient. He uses knowledge in a very broad aspect: knowledge of revelation and knowledge of practical religion. We can assume that by this that he means knowledge of all matters, whether of specific (e.g., prayer and fasting) or general forms of *ibadah* (e.g., economic activity, politics, and social relationships), and how we perform all of the above. Similarly, action is both outward (*al-amal al-zahirah*), consisting of specific actions to God, family, society, and inward (*al-amal al-batinah*).

The second group consists mainly of purifying the heart (*tazkiyat al-qalb*) and beautifying the soul (*tahliyat al-qalb*). Knowledge, he stresses, covers both knowledge of God (including His divine essence and attributes), of revelation, and of the path to God, which covers all subcategories of both outward and inward action. Throughout his works, al-Ghazali stresses the hierarchy of knowledge and action (i.e., that knowledge and action are of different grades). What is important is that each person always strives to attain the highest level possible. For al-Ghazali, action is meaningful only if it comes from within (i.e., from the soul). Therefore, for action to be good, al-Ghazali stresses the importance of inward action (i.e., purifying and beautifying the soul). Hence our discussion of good character.

Faculties of the Soul: Vices, Virtues, and Good Character (*Husn al-Khuluq*)

Al-Ghazali presents his theory of faculties or powers of the soul in his works on ethics. These faculties are desire, anger, knowledge, and justice. The first two are often referred to as passion (*hawa'*) or sometimes the carnal soul (*nafs*). People must control these faculties through the use of reason (knowledge) and the Shari'ah. The faculty of justice is the enforcer and, if successful, the virtue of justice is established in the soul. This virtue of justice comprises the balanced position of the other three faculties (i.e., temperance [for desire], courage [for anger], and wisdom [for knowledge]).

The importance of introducing the faculty of justice and its chronological sequence in humanity is very important in discussing al-Ghazali's ethics. It also clarifies why we are so concerned with teenagers' values and behavior. Since the faculty of justice (and, to a lesser extent, the faculty of knowledge) is absent in younger children, they are not held accountable for their actions. But as they reach the age of puberty (*bulgh*) and beyond, they are held responsible. This explains the importance of determining whether teenagers have problems as regards their values. Seen in this context, while desire and anger are not bad in and of themselves for adolescents, they must be controlled or regulated by reason and the Shari'ah. Islam does not value the hedonistic view of life, namely, that life's main aim is the unlimited enjoyment of pleasure and delight in this world. Desire and anger have various subcategories. While all of them are important for human beings, they need to be kept in their proper places.

Since character is defined as "an established state of the soul," one cannot have good character in the absence of a "good inward form." Therefore, good character is a state of the soul in which, through the conditions of stability and ease or spontaneity, good actions are done naturally. To attain good character, one must erase vice from one's soul and then beautify it with virtue. In terms of the four faculties discussed earlier, it means that all faculties remain sound, moderate, and mutually harmonious.

A sound faculty of knowledge enables one to distinguish between true and false statements, right and wrong beliefs, and right and wrong actions. The virtue generated in the soul is wisdom. A sound faculty of anger obeys the dictates of reason and the Shari'ah and produces the virtue of courage (*shaja'ah*). A sound faculty of desire yields to reason and the Shari'ah and produces the virtue of temperance (*iffah*). A sound faculty of justice controls the faculties of anger and desire according to the Shari'ah and reason,

produces the virtue of justice (*ʿadl*) in the soul, and creates the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-mutmaʿinnah*) as mentioned in the Qurʿan.

It should be borne in mind that al-Ghazali sees the virtues produced through moral training as the mean (*wast*) between two extremes, which are seen as vices. For example, the extreme of excess of the faculty of knowledge is wickedness (*khubith*), where one has too much knowledge or uses it to fulfill wrong motives or aims, leading to slyness, deceit, trickery, and cunning. As the last one is sometimes needed in the contemporary business world, hence, those involved in business always have been seen as doing something less important. Probably this is why honest business people are given such a high position in the hereafter. The extreme of deficiency is stupidity (*balad*) leading to folly. The mean is wisdom leading to sound management, excellence of mind, penetration of ideas, rightness of opinion, and awareness of the soul's subtle actions and hidden evils.

For the faculty of anger, the excess extreme is rashness (*ahawwur*) leading to boastfulness, haughtiness, fury, pride, and conceit. At the extreme of deficiency is cowardice (*jubn*), which produces a lack of self-respect, impatience, baseness, small-mindedness, and an aversion to receiving rights. The mean is courage leading to liberality, intrepidity, manliness, self-control, endurance, forbearance, fortitude, repression of anger, dignity, and amiability. An excess of desire leads to greed (*sharah*), which produces shamelessness, impurity, extravagance, ostentation, a tendency to defame the character of others, a preoccupation with useless activities, flattery, envy, rejoicing in others' misfortune, and despising the poor. A deficiency of desire leads to the total annihilation of desire, self-humiliation, and miserliness. The mean produces temperance, which manifests itself in generosity, modesty, patience, contentment, piety, kindness, helpfulness, wit, and a lack of covetousness. Should all means be attained, we would have the virtue of justice; if they are not attained, we would have the vice of injustice (*jawr*).

Table 1 summarizes the excess, deficiency, and mean of each faculty, as discussed above. These are considered instrumental values in this study. In analyzing them, only the faculties of knowledge, anger, and desire are considered, for the faculty of justice is the enforcer that establishes the virtue of justice in the soul (i.e., the mean position of these three faculties). Since the mean of the faculties are virtues and the extremes (excess and deficiency) are considered vices, in this study the presence of the mean of the faculties in teenagers is preferred while the presence of the extremes is not.

Moral Training and Methods of Inculcating Good Character

Unlike contemporary western writers who try to avoid talking of character (due to its fixity), al-Ghazali discusses good character at length and how character can be changed through moral training. According to Islam's worldview, this is religion's main function and the reason for sending revelation, prophets, and messengers. The Prophet said: "Make your character beautiful." Since Muslims are to emulate the Prophet, character can be molded. Some people naturally possess good character (*bi al-tab' wa al-fitrah*); however, most people attain good character through mortification (*mujahadah*) and self-training (*riyadah*). In other words, they strive to perform those actions that proceed from good character until they become habitual and pleasant. This refers to the circular relationship between action and character, as discussed by al-Ghazali, or to interaction theory. Besides habituation, good character also can be achieved by observing, associating with, and following good people. Therefore, the usual two ways of attaining good character are habituation and association.

Al-Ghazali then discusses the stages of attaining good character, beginning with the existence of evil traits in the soul. Once this is accepted (one's value system should make this clear), the person should remove these traits by removing their causes (i.e., the vices in one's soul). Through knowledge and action, one then must perform good acts so that vices are removed and replaced by virtues (*ilaj`amali*). This requires individual perseverance, commitment, and requests for divine grace.

Methodology

Secondary school students were selected to represent teenagers. Students were chosen from those in Forms 1, 3, and 5 in above-average, average, and below-average classes to capture the various age groups as well as academic ability. Ten schools were selected based on the following criteria: number of students; location (rural or urban); number of Form 1, 3 and 5 classes; ethnic composition of schools; and other criteria.

Sampling Instruments. Questionnaires were used and consisted of questions designed to elicit data about the students' socioeconomic background, relationship with their parents, neighborhood activities, personality, peers, involvement in social problems, leisure activities, religiosity, and values.

Data Collection Procedures. After the pilot study and necessary modifications, the actual surveys were conducted in the chosen schools. In addi-

tion to supervising how the surveys were conducted, researchers interviewed the principals, discipline teachers, and counselors to obtain further insights into their social problems at the schools.

Measurement of Variables

Terminal Values. As mentioned in the literature review, terminal values are described as the “desirable end-states of existence”²¹ or “goals in life.”²² In this study, the values classified as terminal are based on al-Ghazali’s description of the means to happiness, which consist of three categories of goods (i.e., goods of the soul, goods of the body, and external goods).¹³

Several items were selected for inclusion in the questionnaire to reflect each category of goods: strong faith, wisdom, and good moral conduct (for goods of the soul); health, long life, and physical strength (for goods of the body); and wealth, influence/power, and reverence/respect (for external goods). These items were listed randomly, and respondents were required to rank them based on their most-desirable or least-desirable nature. The average ranking of items in each category of goods then was computed to determine the three categories’ overall ranking.

Instrumental Values. Measuring instrumental values (i.e., the means to achieve the end goals) was based on al-Ghazali’s theory of the soul’s faculties, parts, or powers as discussed in the literature review. These faculties are desire, anger, knowledge, and justice. Each faculty, except justice, was considered as a category for measuring instrumental values.

For the category of desire, we determined whether respondents have the value of excess in desire, deficient in desire, or mean of desire. A similar approach was adopted for the categories of anger and knowledge. A list of statements considered reflective of each value was formulated and included in both the parent and student questionnaires. Respondents were required to indicate their extent of agreement (strongly disagree, disagree, indifferent, agree, and strongly agree) with each statement.

Factor analysis was carried out to determine if the constructed statements fell in the appropriate categories specified *a priori* and to check the validity of these items in measuring instrumental value. In addition, factor analysis was used to obtain measurements (scores) for each category. The scores range from 1 to 4, where 1 implies a minimal amount of the instrumental value and 4 indicates a great amount of that value.

As stated earlier, we computed three separate measures (for deficiency, excess, and mean) for each faculty (anger, desire, and knowledge). Thus we

may have, for example, a person with a high score for both excess of desire and deficient in desire. This appears to be contradictory, since one who has an excess of desire should not have a deficiency in desire. One could argue that this could be a weakness in the measurement of instrumental values. However, having a very low score for excess of desire does not necessarily imply that one has a deficiency or a mean of desire, for having an excess of desire means that one exhibits certain characteristics. Similarly, having a deficiency or mean of desire indicates that one displays other characteristics. All of these characteristics do not necessarily lie on the same scale.

Social Problems

Numerous works on social problems exist in sociology and psychology, but are beyond this paper's scope.¹⁴ However, the main elements that characterize social problems are as follows. Such problems, defined as conditions that affect a significant number of people, are considered undesirable, as they are incompatible with the values held by people; are perceived as undesirable by a significant number of people; and are remediable by collective effort.

Based on these elements and using the list of social problems produced by the Ministry of National Unity and Community Development, Malaysia (1997),¹⁵ we consider the following to be social problems among Malaysian teenagers: drinking liquor, sex (discriminate or indiscriminate), stealing, drug abuse, close proximity between sexes in a closed/secluded place (*khal-wat*), gambling, running away from home, loafing, illegal motor racing, truancy, smoking, vandalism, gangsterism, and watching pornographic videos.

Results

The sample for teenagers consisted of 2,869 Form 1, 3, and 5 students from ten secondary schools in Johor. The girls (49.3%) and boys (50.7%) were from various ethnic and religious groups. (Refer to Table 2.)

Teenagers' Terminal Values. For the student respondents, we obtained the mean ranking for each category of goods and determined the order of desirability by comparing the mean values using t-tests. The results indicate that goods of the soul (e.g., strong faith, wisdom, and good moral character) were ranked most desirable compared to the other two groups. Bodily goods (e.g., health, long life, and physical strength) were ranked second, and external goods (e.g., wealth, influence/power, and reverence/respect) were the least desirable. There were no differences in rankings between male and female students, and between students from urban and rural

schools. The order of rankings of these terminal values also remained the same for students in different forms (age groups), classes, and districts.

However, there were differences in ranking across ethnic groups. Malay students ranked soul goods as the most desirable, bodily goods as the second most desirable, and external goods as the least desirable. Malaysian Chinese students, on the other hand, placed the highest desirability on bodily goods over soul and external goods, while Malaysian Indian students ranked soul and bodily goods as of equal desirability. (Refer to Table 3.)

Similar distinctions also were found across religious groups. Goods of the soul are the most desirable to Muslims, compared to bodily and external goods. Hindus found bodily and soul goods equally desirable, while Buddhist and Christian students preferred bodily goods to soul goods. These findings are consistent with earlier findings, since most Muslims were Malay, most Hindus were Indian, and most Christians and Buddhists were Chinese. The results suggest that values differ among teenagers of different ethnic or religious backgrounds.

Teenagers' Instrumental Values. Factor analysis using principal components with varimax rotation was conducted. Four factors were identified, on which 13 of the 23 items yielded significant loadings. Based on the *a priori* expectations about the categories each item should fall into, we omitted three items to have "cleaner" groupings. Factor "scores" are computed by taking the average scores on those items. The scores are on a scale of 1 to 4. Table 4 lists the factors/values, the statements of which the responses are included in the measurement of the respective factors, and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients.¹⁶

The average score was computed for each value. T-tests were applied to determine whether instrumental values are present or absent among the students. Specifically, we tested if the average score was above or below 2.5.¹⁷ Table 5 presents the mean scores for the categories of instrumental values. In general, students had the mean of knowledge, anger, and desire. The results also indicated that excess of desire and deficient in anger were absent. We conducted similar analyses to determine the presence or absence of the values for specific groups. Comparisons were made for individuals according to gender, form, ethnicity, and religion. The findings were somewhat similar to those obtained in general, the only differences being in the mean of desire. Teenagers in Form 5 lacked the mean of desire, and results are indeterminate for Chinese Christian and Buddhist teenagers. Since school form is a proxy for age, this implies that teenagers seem not to have the mean of desire, but rather tend to have the excess of desire as they grow older.¹⁸

Social Problems. The responses from the survey indicate that teenagers were involved in various social problems. Table 6 reports that loafing was the most common, in which 37.8% of respondents were involved at least once in their lifetime. Truancy was the second most prevalent problem (34.4%), and smoking and watching pornographic videos were third and fourth, respectively. The least common ones are getting involved in drugs (2%) and engaged in sex (2%). It is very possible that the results obtained may be biased downwards. This was despite the fact that we emphasized the confidentiality of all responses. Thus the true percentages might be higher.

The results, shown in Table 7, found that truancy and smoking are more problematic for Malay (Muslim) teenagers. Chinese teenagers were more involved in drinking liquor, gambling, and running away from home, and less involved in vandalism. Indians were less into loafing. Similar results were obtained for the analysis of religious groups.

Social Problems and Terminal Values. One main objective of the study is to study the relationship between social problems and values. It is hypothesized that values play an important role in a person's life and mold his or her character. The results in Table 8 reveal that social problems are more common among teenagers with high desires of external goods (e.g., wealth, influence, and respect). These teenagers were more involved in drinking, free sex, gambling, cohabitation, running away from home, loafing, illegal motorbike racing, truancy, and gangsterism.

On the other hand, teenagers who put priority on strong faith, wisdom, and good moral conduct were less involved in the social problems mentioned above and also less into drugs and pornographic videos. However, they were more involved with stealing and smoking. Perhaps those teenagers may be aware of their weaknesses and aspire to have a stronger faith and a better moral conduct.

The importance of bodily goods is negatively correlated with free sex, truancy, smoking, and vandalism. These findings are expected, since those who value health, long life, and physical strength keep away from activities that might be detrimental to such life-values. The results also show that these teenagers watched more pornographic videos than others. However, one perplexing result is that these were the same teenagers who were more involved in drinking and gambling. A possible explanation is that they may not perceive these activities as adverse to their life-desires.

Social Problems and Instrumental Values. We conducted similar analyses to examine the relationship between social problems and instrumental values. All of the social problems, with the exception of drinking, are pos-

itively correlated with an excess of desire. In other words, social problems were more common in teenagers with an excess of desire. This is consistent with our expectations, in that an excess of desire implies greed, which includes shamelessness, impurity, extravagance, and preoccupation with useless activities. Thus one who has an excess of desire will have higher inclinations toward social problems.

A deficiency in anger (cowardice) can be characterized as being small-minded, lacking in self-respect, impatient, and adverse to receiving rights. Therefore, those who are deficient in anger were likely to have a weak character. The findings confirm this conjecture. Free sex and running away from home were common in teenagers who lacked anger. However, they were less into truancy and more likely to be influenced by others to engage in such immoral activities as free sex. In addition, they would run away from home rather than deal with their problems.

Teenagers having the mean of desire, knowledge, and anger were less involved in most of the social problems. Results show that the correlation coefficients are mostly significant, at least at the 10% level. Thus, having good values is important in leading a healthy life – behavior is a reflection of values.

Conclusion

This paper analyzed the relationship between values and social problems. The study developed an Islamic benchmark (standard) to measure the values of our teenaged Malaysian respondents. This attempt to develop an appropriate benchmark must be seen as a preliminary effort to conduct empirical research based on frameworks reflecting a religious perspective. Certainly the process of transforming Islamic concepts, values, and norms into survey forms that later will be used to measure people's understanding and behavior is a prerequisite to any attempt to conduct meaningful empirical research from an Islamic perspective. This process is one part of the Islamization of knowledge.

Our survey and analysis showed that good values (terminal and instrumental) lead to less involvement in social problems. Since religion is an important factor in value determination, its proper understanding must be stressed to develop the balanced and moral society envisaged in Vision 2020. Religion must be correctly understood and constantly internalized in one's values and reflected in one's behavior. Finally, if policies have to be implemented to tackle social problems, they must be derived from our framework.

Tables

Table 1: The Mean and Extremes of Faculties

<i>Faculty</i>	<i>Deficient</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Excess</i>
Faculty of Knowledge • Wisdom is a state of the soul which enables one to distinguish right from wrong in all voluntary actions	Stupidity • foolishness • little experience in affairs • insanity	Wisdom • soundness of mgmt • rightness of opinion • awareness of the soul's subtle actions and evils	Wickedness • slyness • deceit • trickery • cunning
Faculty of Anger • Courage is a state of the soul in which the faculty of anger is always obedient to reason.	Cowardice • small-mindedness • lack of self-respect • impatience • aversion to receiving rights	Courage • self-control • repression of anger • forbearance • dignity	Rashness • boastfulness • arrogance/ rudeness • fury • pride • conceit
Faculty of Desire • Temperance is a state of the soul in which the faculty of desire is disciplined under the commands of reason and the Shari'ah.	Annihilation • miserliness • self-humiliation	Temperance • generosity • modesty • patience • contentment • piety • kindness • helpfulness • wit • lack of covetousness	Greed • shamelessness • impurity • extravagance • tendency to defame the character of others • boldness • preoccupation with useless activities • envy • rejoicing in others' misfortune
Faculty of Justice • Justice in respect of bodily members consists in using them in proper ways • Justice in conduct toward others is giving each one his due and in not harming any one in any way.	Injustice	Justice	Injustice

Table 2: Sample Description of Student Respondents

		<i>Gender</i>				<i>Total</i>	
		<i>Female</i>		<i>Male</i>			
<i>Ethnic groups</i>	Malay	964	(68.2)	987	(67.9)	1951	(68.1)
	Chinese	381	(27.0)	391	(26.9)	772	(26.9)
	Indian	66	(4.7)	69	(4.7)	135	(4.7)
	Others	2	(0.1)	7	(0.5)	9	(0.3)

		Gender				Total	
		Female		Male			
<i>Form</i>	One	453	(32.1)	517	(35.6)	970	(33.9)
	Three	474	(33.5)	488	(33.6)	962	(33.6)
	Five	486	(34.4)	446	(30.7)	932	(32.5)
<i>Religion</i>	Islam	964	(68.6)	993	(68.6)	1957	(68.6)
	Christianity	25	(1.8)	41	(2.8)	66	(2.3)
	Hinduism	60	(4.3)	61	(4.2)	121	(4.2)
	Buddhism	352	(25.0)	338	(23.3)	690	(24.2)
	Others	5	(0.4)	15	(1.0)	20	(0.7)
<i>School type</i>	Rural	925	(65.4)	808	(55.5)	1733	(60.4)
	Urban	489	(34.6)	647	(44.5)	1136	(39.6)
<i>District</i>	Segamat	311	(22.0)	234	(16.1)	545	(19.0)
	Muar	510	(36.1)	378	(26.0)	888	(31.0)
	Batu Pahat	180	(12.7)	408	(28.0)	588	(20.5)
	Johor Bahru	413	(29.2)	435	(29.9)	848	(29.6)
<i>Total</i>		1414	(49.3)	1455	(50.7)	2869	(100)

Notes: Percentages in parentheses. The sum of the items in each category may not add up to the total number respondents due to missing values.

Table 3: Students' Terminal Values: Ranking of Importance

		<i>Soul goods (strong faith, wisdom, good moral character)</i>	<i>Bodily goods (health, long-life, physical strength)</i>	<i>External goods (wealth, influence/ reverence/respect)</i>
<i>All</i>		1	2	3
<i>Gender</i>	Male	1	2	3
	Female	1	2	3
<i>Form</i>	1	1	2	3
	3	1	2	3
	5	1	2	3
<i>Ethnicity</i>	Malay	1	2	3
	Chinese	2	1	3
	Indian	1.5	1.5	3
<i>Religion</i>	Islam	1	2	3
	Christianity	2	1	3
	Hinduism	1.5	1.5	3
	Buddhism	2	1	3
<i>District</i>	Segamat	1	2	3
	Muar	1	2	3
	B. Pahat	1	2	3
	J. Bahru	1	2	3
<i>School</i>	Bandar	1	2	3
	Luar Bandar	1	2	3
<i>Class</i>	Below average	1	2	3
	Average	1	2	3
	Above average	1	2	3

Note: A ranking of 1 indicates most desirable; 2 second most desirable; and 3 least desirable.

Table 4: Instrumental Values

<i>Instrumental Value</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
<i>Deficient in anger</i>	I would not say anything even though I see a wrongdoing. I do not mind being ridiculed as long as I'm accepted as part of the group. If someone embarrasses me without any reason, I will usually not say anything.	0.4726
<i>Excess of desire</i>	I feel happy wearing branded clothing that others do not own. I will usually do whatever I like, as long as I'm having fun. If I want something, I will do whatever it takes to get it. I don't care what happens to others, as long as I'm safe and happy.	0.5307
<i>Mean of knowledge and anger</i>	I don't care if my friends taunt me, as long as I know I'm doing the right thing. I usually can remain calm when someone makes me angry.	0.4180
<i>Mean of desire</i>	I always feel that what I have is adequate.	-

Table 5: Mean Scores of Students' Instrumental Values

		<i>Instrumental Values</i>			
		<i>Deficient in anger</i>	<i>Excess of desire</i>	<i>Mean of desire</i>	<i>Mean of knowledge and anger</i>
<i>All</i>		2.0206	2.2564	2.5803	2.9128
<i>Gender</i>	Male	2.0805	2.3495	2.5927	2.9063
	Female	1.9594	2.1611	2.5677	2.9195
<i>Form</i>	1	2.1601	2.2565	2.7483	2.9374
	3	1.9896	2.2612	2.5601	2.8911
	5	1.9154	2.2690	2.4276	2.9095
<i>Ethnicity</i>	Malay	1.9754	2.2931	2.6003	2.9847
	Chinese	2.1525	2.1893	2.5007	2.7068
	Indian	1.9394	2.0684	2.7520	2.9828
<i>Religion</i>	Islam	1.8755	2.2912	2.6003	2.9861
	Christianity	2.2143	2.2318	2.4590	2.9464
	Hinduism	1.9514	2.0863	2.7477	2.9903
	Buddhism	2.1363	2.1747	2.5297	2.6924

		<i>Instrumental Values</i>			
		<i>Deficient in anger</i>	<i>Excess of desire</i>	<i>Mean of desire</i>	<i>Mean of knowledge and anger</i>
<i>District</i>	Segamat	1.9610	2.3001	2.5250	3.0186
	Muar	1.9942	2.1969	2.6529	2.9206
	B. Pahat	2.0858	2.3041	2.5486	2.8662
	J. Bahru	2.0423	2.2565	2.5614	2.8675
<i>School</i>	Rural	2.0159	2.2312	2.6057	2.8721
	Urban	2.0276	2.3030	2.5412	2.9736
<i>Class</i>	Below average	2.1838	2.3562	2.6381	2.8669
	Average	1.9785	2.2439	2.6027	2.9164
	Above average	1.9285	2.1803	2.5050	2.9411

Table 6 : Teenagers' Involvement in Social Problems

<i>Social Problem</i>	<i>At least once (%)</i>	<i>Social Problem</i>	<i>At least once (%)</i>
Drinking liquor	11.3	Illegal motorbike racing	11.4
Free sex	2.4		
Stealing	14.5	Truancy	34.4
Drugs	2	Smoking	21.8
Close proximity (<i>khalwat</i>)	2.7	Vandalism	15.3
Gambling	18.2	Gangsterism	7.5
Running away from home	4.5	Sex	2
Loafing	37.8	Porno videos	21.2

Table 7: Social Problems: Comparisons among Different Groups

<i>Social Problem</i>	<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>Religion</i>
Drinking liquor	Chinese>Indian>Malay	Christian=Buddhist>Hindu>Muslim
Free sex		Islam=Christian>Buddhist
Stealing	Malay>Chinese	Islam=Christian>Buddhist
Drugs		Christian>Muslim>Buddhist
Close proximity	Chinese >Malay	Christian>Muslim=Hindu=Buddhist
Gambling	Chinese >Malay=Indian	Christian=Buddhist> Hindu>Muslim
Running away from home	Chinese >Malay=Indian	Buddhist=Hindu>Muslim
Loafing	Malay=Chinese>Indian	Muslim=Christian=Buddhist>Hindu
Illegal motor-bike racing	Chinese >Malay	Buddhist>Muslim=Christian
Truancy	Malay>Chinese=Indian	Muslim=Christian>Hindu Muslim>Buddhist
Smoking	Malay>Chinese=Indian	Muslim>Christian=Hindu=Buddhist
Vandalism	Malay=Indian>Chinese	Muslim=Hindu>Christian=Buddhist
Gangsterism	Chinese=Indian>Malay	Christian>Buddhist>Muslim Hindu>Muslim
Sex		Christian>Buddhist=Muslim
Porno videos	Chinese>Indian	

Notes: X>Y: X is more involved in that social problem than Y; X=Y: no difference in the level of involvement between X and Y. Only significant differences (at least at a 10% level) are given.

Table 8: Social Problems and Terminal Values

<i>Social Problem</i>	<i>Terminal Values</i>		
	<i>Soul goods (strong faith, wisdom, good moral character)</i>	<i>Bodily goods (health, long-life physical strength)</i>	<i>External goods (wealth, influence/ power, reverence/ respect)</i>
Drinking liquor	-.290***	.208***	.235***
Free sex	-.047**	-.038**	.045**
Stealing	.032*	-.070***	-.001
Drugs	-.035*	.008	.031
Gambling	-.276***	.160***	.233***
Close proximity	-.053***	.003	.037**
Running away from home	-.096***	-.011	.080***
Loafing	-.069***	-.002	.068***
Illegal motorbike racing	-.122***	.003	.105***
Truancy	-.027	-.054***	.040**
Smoking	.040**	-.082***	-.026
Vandalism	.007	-.043**	.027
Gangsterism	-.139***	-.011	.151***
Sex	-.022	-.024	.022
Porno videos	-.068***	.033*	.055

* significant at a 10% level, ** significant at a 5% level, *** significant at a 1% level.

Table 9: Social Problems and Instrumental Values

<i>Social Problem</i>	<i>Instrumental Values</i>			
	<i>Deficient in anger</i>	<i>Excess of desire</i>	<i>Mean of desire</i>	<i>Mean of knowledge and anger</i>
Drinking liquor	.015	.013	-.059***	-.086***
Free sex	.044**	.119***	-.032*	-.020
Stealing	.002	.135***	-.088***	-.018
Drugs	-.003	.063***	-.052***	-.074***
Gambling	-.004	.080***	-.069***	-.118***
Close proximity	-.023	.072***	-.047**	-.025
Running away from home	.045**	.090***	.007	-.064***
Loafing	-.030	.202***	-.092***	-.071***
Illegal motorbike racing	.023	.129***	-.018	-.054***
Truancy	-.034*	.187***	-.058***	-.029
Smoking	-.028	.154***	-.008	-.018
Vandalism	.003	.152***	-.084***	-.024
Gangsterism	.014	.088***	-.063***	-.050***
Sex	.014	.086***	-.036*	.002
Porno videos	-.017	.139***	-.080***	-.055***

* significant at a 10% level, ** significant at a 5% level, *** significant at a 1% level.

Notes

1. Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics of Islam* (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: 1976); and J. Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: The Free Press, 1973).
2. P. Cohen and J. Cohen, *Life Values and Adolescent Mental Health* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., 1996).
3. Rokeach, *Human Values*.
4. *Ibid.*, 13.
5. *Ibid.*, 8.
6. *Ibid.*, 21.
7. Abul Quasem, *Ethics*.
8. *Ibid.*, 22.
9. Rokeach, *Human Values*, 1973.
10. Abul Quasem, *Ethics*, 9.
11. Rokeach, *Human Values*.
12. Cohen and Cohen, *Life Values*.
13. Abul Quasem, *Ethics*,
14. Our overall project included a literature review, especially of sociological and psychological studies, that discussed the definitions of, approaches to, and causes of social problems. It is not included in this paper.
15. *The Ministry of National Unity and Community Development, Malaysia*, "Executive Summary Report on Current Social Problems" (paper presented by the chief secretary of the Ministry of National Unity and Community Development, Brainstorming Session on Social Issues and Problems in the State of Johor, Kota Tinggi, Malaysia, 6-8 March 1997).
16. Cronbach's alpha is a reliability coefficient whose value can vary from 0 to 1. It measures a scale's reliability (in our study, the scales are the instrumental values). An interpretation of alpha is the squared correlation between the score a person obtains on a particular scale (the observed score) and the score he or she would have obtained if questioned on all possible items in the universe (the true score). Thus a higher alpha value implies a more reliable scale. However, the alpha's value is affected by the number of items included in the scale – the more the items, the higher the value. Norusis, *SPSS Professional Statistics 6.1* (Chicago: SPSS, Inc. 1993).
17. Note that for each statement included in the instrumental values categories, respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement: 1 corresponds to totally disagree, 2 to disagree, 3 to agree, and 4 to totally agree. The average scores for the four instrumental values are continuous variables, of which the values lie between 1 and 4. Thus 2.5 is the cut-off point, where a score of less than 2.5 indicate absence and a score greater than 2.5 implies presence. If the score is 2.5, the result is indeterminate.
18. The mean score for excess of desire, although less than 2.5, is lowest for Form 1 and highest for Form 5 students.