

## RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF MALAYSIA'S WELLBEING INDEXES

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### Abstract

Amongst the 57 members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) countries, Malaysia is at number one rating in the Islamicity Index, Islamic Index of Wellbeing and Global Muslim Travel Index studies. The rating gave the impression of the liveability or wellbeing in Malaysia within the Islamic sphere. This recognition prompts the study on the indicators of wellbeing that Malaysia has focused on Islamic dimensions. Consequently, content analysis was done on six selected government documents namely the Malaysian Wellbeing Index, the Malaysian Family Wellbeing Index, the Malaysian Urban-Rural National Indicators Network for Sustainable Development, the Malaysian Shariah Index, the Malaysian Ummah Development Index and the Muslim Religiosity and Personality Indexing. The study found that the first three documents embodied indirect religious dimensions in their wellbeing indexing while the latter three have direct religious dimensions. The incorporation of the religious dimensions into the Malaysia's wellbeing indexing either directly or indirectly shows the relevancy of the religious factor to human wellbeing. Noticeably, the indicators promulgated under each study are organizationally-driven aiming at attaining their specific objectives that invariably led to variations amongst the agencies. Nonetheless, religion has been found to command a significant factor in the wellbeing of Malaysian though different indicators have been used by the six organizations to arrive at this fact.

**Keywords:** Index, Malaysia, Religion, Quality of Life, Wellbeing.

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### 1. Introduction

The Federal Constitution of Malaysia endorsed Islam as the religion of the Federation. This is specifically stated in Article 3(1) however other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony. Indeed, in the drive towards efficient public service delivery, the government commits itself to instill religious principles in its development strategies and public policies. As testimony to the seriousness of the government machinery, the Prime Minister launched the Malaysian Shari'ah Index (MSI) on February 10, 2015 as a Key Performance Index tool to measure the compliance of shari'ah (Islamic law) in its administration. Eight sectors that hinged on Malaysian wellbeing were measured namely law, politics, social, culture, education, economics, health, infrastructure and environment. On the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2016, he announced that the overall score of the Shari'ah compliance of these sectors was 75.42 per cent last year. This reflects a scientific measure of the country's achievements from the prism of Islam. In relation to the religious dimension of the wellbeing indicators in Malaysia, several government agencies, like the Federal Town and Country Planning Department (FTCPD), The Economic Planning Unit (EPU), The Institute of Understanding Islam (popularly referred to as IKIM) and The National Family and Population Development Board (in Malay, LPPKN) had, to a certain extent, shown that the initiative to integrate the Islamic factor had in fact begun earlier. However, unlike the MSI, these studies were not explicitly streamlined according to the *Maqasid al-shari'ah* categorization. For the MSI, the five *Maqasid* categories i.e. faith, self, intellect, lineage and wealth were based upon as the main indicators of human wellbeing. The Muslim Religiosity and Personality Indexing (MRPI) developed by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in 2004 which focused on the religious component could also be incorporated to beef up the Malaysian wellbeing indicators undertaken by the other agencies.

Some emerging questions that need to be addressed include why is religion important?; What is its relationship with human wellbeing?; How has it been measured?. The paper henceforth attempts to answer these questions by looking into the existence of religious dimension in each kind of index, the degree of its attachment to the human wellbeing based on the result of the survey and the religious-related indicators.

Thus, the sequence of this paper is structured under five sections starting with the introductory remarkson the state of the wellbeing indexing studies in Malaysia, followed by a section on literature review of each wellbeing index explaining their indicators in detail. Section three describes the methodology adopted in this study followed by the analysis and discussion in section four. Finally section five concludes the discussion.

## 2. Malaysian Wellbeing Indexes

Available published materials suggest that in Malaysia there are several indexes related to the wellbeing studies. They are all government-led initiatives. Based on the authors' observations, there are six remarkable ones with their respective agencies as listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Wellbeing related indexes in Malaysia and their governing agencies

No	Wellbeing related indexes	Government agencies
1	Malaysian Wellbeing Index (MWI)	Economic Planning Unit (EPU)
2	Malaysian Family Wellbeing Index (MFWI)	National Family and Population Development Board (in Malay, LPPKN)
3	Malaysian Urban-Rural National Indicators Network for Sustainable Development (MURNInets)	Federal Town and Country Planning Department (in Malay, JPBD)
4	Malaysian Shari'ah Index (MSI)	Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (in Malay, JAKIM)
5	Malaysian Ummah Development Index (MUDI)	Institute of Understanding Islam (in Malay, IKIM)
6	Muslim Religiosity and Personality Indexing (MRPI)	Institute for Community and Peace Studies (in Malay, PEKKA, UPM)

It now becomes essential to describe each one of the above indexes in detail as follows:

### 1. Malaysian Wellbeing Index, Economic Planning Unit (EPU)

The Malaysian Wellbeing Index (MWI) documented in 2013 under the purview of EPU is a continuation of the Malaysian Quality of Life Index (MQLI) 1999, 2002, 2004 and 2011 series. However, as Malaysia progresses towards a high-income economy, the government felt that there is a need to further strengthen the indicators of the MQLI to be more comprehensive. Hence, the MQLI was enhanced and reformulated into the MWI comprising 2 sub composites, 14 components and 68 indicators. The objectives of MWI are, firstly, to complement the measurement of economic development which is traditionally based on income per capita; secondly to measure impacts of socio-economic policies on the quality of life and wellbeing of the people; and lastly to identify socio-economic issues in order to formulate appropriate policies and strategies. The government is striving to deliver a well-balanced socio-economic advancement to the country and its population by 2020.

### 2. Malaysian Family Wellbeing Index, National Family and Population Development Board

The Malaysian Family Wellbeing Index (MFWI) is an initiative of the National Family and Population Development Board, Malaysia in 2011. It was developed to measure the state of wellbeing of families, as well as for use in new social policy formulation, planning for implementation of future research, the development of new programmes and services, and expansion of programmes under the Board. The development of the MFWI was focused on subjective wellbeing in which all respondents were asked to give assessments on these seven

dimensions and 24 indicators related to their family. The MFWI used the value of 10 as the maximum score. Because of its usefulness, the authority is now working on the second MFWI study via surveys in 2016.

### **3. Malaysian Urban-Rural National Indicators Network for Sustainable Development, Federal Town and Country Planning Department**

The Federal Town and Country Planning Department (FTCPD) had started to formulate the Malaysian Urban Rural Indicators Network (MURNInet) in 1998. The MURNInet is an innovative system that determines the sustainability level of an urban area by using a set of urban indicators. It enables the tracking of the sustainability status of an urban area whether it has increased, reduced or static. In MURNInet - A sustainable urban area is defined as an area that is capable of sustaining its social, economic and physical development achievements whilst maintaining excellence in culture and environment. MURNInet is applicable to all the 154 Local Authorities in Malaysia since their role is crucial in creating peoples' wellbeing. Moreover, to keep tabs with emerging issues of urbanization and sustainability, the MURNInet had to be revised and in 2012 the FTCPD produced the Malaysian Urban-Rural National Indicators Network on Sustainable Development (MURNInets) which is streamlined into six dimensions, 21 themes and 36 indicators.

### **4. Malaysian Shari'ah Index, Department of Islamic Development Malaysia**

Malaysian Shari'ah Index (MSI) was prepared by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia. This index is said to be a scientific evaluating method that serves two functions. Firstly, it evaluates the seriousness of the government's efforts on a yearly basis in meeting the Islamic standards when implementing government policies and programs. Secondly, it identifies areas for improvement that need the government's attention. In addition, it also serves as a benchmark to determine if the country is fulfilling the objectives of Islamic principles (*Maqasid al-Shariah*), and objectively gauging Malaysia's commitment in achieving the five aspects of the *Maqasid al-Shariah*. The MSI is one of the development indexes based on the five main elements (*daruriyyat al-khams*) of the *Maqasid al-shariah* (Objectives of Islamic Law). This move proved Malaysia's commitment in developing its policies and national administrative and development programs that are *shariah* compliant via the eight important sectors i.e. jurisprudence, politics, economics, education, health, culture, infrastructure and environment and social.

### **5. Malaysian Ummah Development Index, Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia**

The Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) has proposed a Malaysian Ummah Development Index (MUDI) in 2014 to indicate the achievement of the Muslim population in their wellbeing. MUDI emphasised the balance between the three types of wellbeing i.e. economic, social and spiritual via its three dimensions and 21 indicators. MUDI is an extension to the economic development and social development indicators devised in the MWI, 2013. It is developed to integrate the physical and spiritual development aspects. This index would help provide an indicator of development for the Muslims which inculcate the spiritual elements. This is because Muslim societies in Malaysia in particular require several indicators that would be able to show whether those social and economic development achieved fulfils the comprehensive requirements as set forth by the teachings of Islam.

### **6. Muslim Religiosity-Personality Indexing, University Putra Malaysia**

The Muslim Religiosity-Personality Indexing (MRPI) has been developed in 2004 to measure components of Muslim religiosity and to understand it from the perspective of adherence, orientation, attitude and their relation to personality and its manifestations in everyday behaviours. The MRPI measurement model was developed as the basis to assess three aspects of *Islam*, *Iman* and *Ihsan* in relation to the Islamic Worldview and Religious Personality. *Iman* includes individual knowledge and perceptions towards the six articles of *Iman* while *Ihsan* includes individual attitudes and behaviours that emerge from his/her

values. Hence, these are manifested in their practice of the five tenets of *Islam.Ihsan* means the spiritual excellence or actualization of the highest order. The collective attainment of *ihsan* at the community level protects the individuals, communities and the environment.

Having explained all the six documents, there emerge two sets of Islamic wellbeing indicators either the dimension is directly or indirectly mentioned. Thus, the study proceeded with an analysis on their respective indicators using a content analysis method.

### 3.Method

The aim of the study reported herein is to deduce the religious dimension from the contemporary indexes of peoples' wellbeing in Malaysia. This deduction is made to evaluate the degree of its existence to strategise steps for improvement. The study employed a desk research approach to identify studies of the peoples' wellbeing and six documents had been recognized as relevant. Having identified the documents, their indicators were critically reviewed using the content analysis method which finally leads to the study's findings of the religious dimensions in them.

#### 3.1 Analysis and discussion

The aim of the study is to derive the religious dimension in each wellbeing index of Malaysia. Thus a critical review of its indicators was conducted individually. MWI comprises of 2 sub composites, 14 components and 68 indicators as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Two sub composites, fourteen components and sixty-eight indicators of the MWI

<b>Malaysian Wellbeing Index, Economic Planning Unit (EPU)</b>		
<b>1. Economic wellbeing</b>		
<b>i. Transport</b> -Road development index -Private motorcars & motorcycles (per 10,000 population) -Road length per capita (km) -Rail ridership (million)	<b>ii. Working life</b> -Trade disputes (-) -Man-days lost due to industrial action ('000)(-) -Industrial accidents (-) -Average working hours (-)	<b>iii. Income &amp; distribution</b> -Real per capita income (GNP)(RM) -Gini coefficient based on disposable income (-) -Incidence of poverty (-)
<b>iv. Education</b> -Pre-school participation rate -Primary school participation rate -Secondary school participation rate -Tertiary participation rate -Literacy rate -% of graduate teachers in primary school -% of graduate teachers in secondary school -National average grade UPSR -National average grade SPM -Number of lecturers with PhD -Primary education survival rate -Secondary education survival rate		<b>v. Communications</b> -Fixed & mobile telephone line subscriptions (per 10,000 population) -Internet subscriber (per 10,000 population) -Number of hotspot locations -Number of domain name (per 10,000 population)
<b>2. Social wellbeing</b>		
<b>i. Housing</b> -% of low-cost housing units to bottom 40 -% of households with treated water -% of households with electricity	<b>ii. Leisure</b> -No. of households with paid TV subscription (per 10,000 population) -Domestic hotel guests (per 10,000 population) -Recreational parks visitors	<b>iii. Governance</b> -% of corruption cases prosecuted -No. of e-payment transactions (million) -% of cases solved by Public Complaint Bureau



-% of households with garbage collection services -Crowdedness (no. of persons per room)(-)	(per '000 population) -Cinema goers (per 10,000 population)	-% of e-filing users
<b>iv. Public safety</b> -Crime rate (per '000 population) -Road accidents (per '000 vehicles)	<b>v. Social participation</b> -% of registered voters (per population aged 21 years and above -No. of registered non-profit organizations (per 10,000 population) -No. of registered residents' associations -Membership in RELA and RakanCop (per 10,000 population)	<b>vi. Culture</b> -Membership in public libraries (per 10,000 population) -No. of Istana Budaya visitors (per 10,000 population) -No. of museum visitors (per 10,000 population) -No. of KompleksKraf visitors (per 10,000 population)
<b>vii. Health</b> -Life expectancy at birth -Non-communicable disease cases (per 10,000 population) -Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) -Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births) -No. of beds in hospitals (per 10,000 population) -Doctor to population ratio -Hospital waiting time for outpatients (minute)	<b>viii. Environment</b> -Air quality (% of station with API <50) -Water quality (% of clean river monitored) -% of forested land -Quantity of scheduled waste generated (tones/year)/population -Maximum mean temperature in Celsius	<b>ix. Family</b> -Divorce rate (% of population aged 18 and above) -Domestic violence cases (per 10,000 population) -Juvenile crimes (% of population aged 10-18) -Mean monthly household income (RM) -Household debt per capita (RM) -Dependency ratio

Source: Malaysian Wellbeing Index Report (2013), EPU

Of the nine components categorized under social wellbeing sub composite, the MWI document defined the component of culture to include religion and belief system, however the indicators used were not reflecting the religious dimension. The indicators were public libraries membership and Istana Budaya, Museum and KompleksKraf visitors. In the 2014 preliminary survey result, it stood at number 9 out of 14 dimensions under study. In contrast, the Malaysian Family Wellbeing Index which consists of 7 dimensions and 24 indicators, incorporated the religious and spirituality indicators specifically into its dimensions. This can be seen clearly in Table 3 below especially in the sixth dimension.

Table 3: Malaysian Family Wellbeing Index and its 7 dimensions and 24 indicators

<b>Malaysian Family Wellbeing Index, National Family and Population Development Board</b>			
<b>1. Family Relationships</b> -Parental involvement -Family resilience -Family functioning -Time with family -Work-family balance -Husband/wife relationship -Parental relationship	<b>2. Family Economy</b> -Family living standards -Family economic situation -Future savings -Debt burden	<b>3. Family Health</b> -Family health practice -Family health level -Stress management	
<b>4. Family Safety</b> -Emergency	<b>5. Family &amp; Community</b>	<b>6. Family &amp; Religion/</b>	<b>7. Housing &amp; Environment</b>

response knowledge -Safety at home -Family safety	-Community cooperation -Community relationship -Community involvement	<b>Spirituality</b> -Role of religion -Spiritual practice	-Basic amenities -Pollution levels
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Source: Malaysian Family Wellbeing Index Report (2011), LPPKN

Under this dimension, two questions were asked i.e. whether religion plays an important role in the everyday life of a family and whether the extent of satisfaction within the family is due to their religious and spiritual practices. Interestingly, this dimension scored the highest at 8.25 while the Family Economy dimension recorded the lowest score at 6.90 only. Moving onto the MURNInets which constitutes 6 dimensions, 21 themes and 36 indicators (see Table 4), there is no specific indicator for religious dimension except in its Happiness Index.

Table 4: MURNInets' 6 dimensions, 21 themes and 36 indicators

<b>Malaysian Urban-Rural National Indicators Network on Sustainable Development, FTCPD</b>		
<b>1. Competitive Economy</b>		
<b>i. Economic growth</b> -Employment growth rate	<b>ii. Poverty</b> -Urban poverty rate -Poverty rate	<b>iii. Private investment</b> -Growth rate of private investment
<b>2. Sustainable Environmental Quality</b>		
<b>i. Environmental quality</b> -Cleanliness level of the river -Air quality conditions	<b>ii. Risk management</b> -% of population living in flood prone area	<b>iii. Environmental management</b> -% of per capita solid waste generation -Total programs/ environmental campaigns carried out in local authority area
<b>3. Sustainable Community</b>		
<b>i. Housing</b> -% of quality affordable housing units	<b>ii. Community facilities and recreations</b> -% residential coverage within 400 meters of community facilities	<b>iii. Quality of life</b> -Ratio of cases relating to public nuisance complaints per 10,000 population -Ratio of cases of water and water borne diseases per 10,000 population -% of Grade A food premises -% of Grade A public toilets <b>-Happiness index</b>
<b>iv. Safety</b> -Ratio of index crimes per 10,000 population		<b>v. Demography</b> -Dependency ratio
<b>4. Optimum Use of Land and Natural Resources</b>		
<b>i. Change of land use</b> -Rate of change in land use from non-built up to built up area	<b>ii. Municipal development</b> -Urbanisation rate -Ratio of public open space per 10,000 population -Unsold residential property	<b>iii. Heritage conservation, agriculture and tourism</b> -% of change in the forest area -Number of tourism attractions and recreational centers

<b>5.Efficient Transportation and Infrastructure</b>		
<b>i.Utilities efficiency</b> -Volume of domestic water consumption per capita -Total electricity consumption (KW) per capita	<b>ii.Solid waste management</b> -% of total waste recycled -% of domestic solid waste collection schedule	
<b>iii.Transportation</b> -Number of integrated public transport terminal stations	<b>iv.Sewerage management</b> -% of homes with centralised sewerage services	
<b>6.Effective Governance</b>		
<b>i.Delivery system</b> -Residents' satisfaction level on Local Authority services -Number of community programs implemented by local authority	<b>ii.Institutional improvement</b> -% of local authority revenue collection performance -% of total maintenance expenditure compared to the overall local authority spending.	<b>iii.Enforcement and monitoring</b> -% of approved planning applications that comply to the development plans -Number of enforcement operations executed according to schedule by Local Planning Authority.

Source: Malaysian Urban-Rural National Indicators Network on Sustainable Development Manual (2013), FTCPD

The Happiness Index 2013 is a study under the dimension of Sustainable Community and Quality of Life theme of the MURNInets. The study is a primary data collection - survey carried out jointly between FTCPD and local authorities and the residents. A total of 13 questions were asked regarding stress level, health, family and partner relationship, job satisfaction, monthly income, neighbour relationship, safety, adequacies of public facilities, environment quality and political representation. Of the 13 questions, there was one question regarding the significance of religion in human life when the respondents were asked whether they believed that spirituality could bring joy and happiness in their lives. Out of the 5 Likert scale, residents' responses in the Barometer analysis of the Happiness Index are consistently at 5.00 (Happier) scales. This shows that Happiness, in especially the religiosity aspect, is a pre-requisite in generating sustainable communities and urban development.

Notwithstanding, by virtue of their names and objectives, the following three indexes portray a more significant content of religious dimension in contrary to the aforesaid three wellbeing indexes. This is evident through their indicators shown in Table 5.

Table 5: The MUDI, MRPI and MSI's indicators

<b>1</b>	<b>Malaysian Ummah Development Index(MUDI), IKIM</b>		
	<b>1.Economic Development Index</b> -Average monthly household income -Gini coefficient -Rate of unemployment -Rate of poverty -Ownership of share capital in limited companies (%) -Ratio of deposit of Islamic banking system and non-	<b>2.Social Development Index</b> -Rate of enrolment in learning institutions -Rate of graduate per 10,000 population -Doctors per 10,000 population -Life expectancy rate -Ratio of marriages per 10,000 population	<b>3.Spiritual Development Index</b> -Number of mosques per 10,000 population -Number of Zakat payers per 10,000 population -Number of Depositors of Tabung Haji per 10,000 population -Number of registered Muslim professionals per

	financial institutions to total banking industry (%) -Per capita zakat	-Ratio of divorces per 10,000 population -Average number of children per family	10,000 population -Number of prisoners per 10,000 population -Number of crimes of integrity per 10,000 population -Number of drug addicts per 10,000 population	
2	<b>Malaysian Shari'ah Index(MSI), JAKIM</b>			
	Politic	Economy	Social	Culture
	Law	Education	Health	Infrastructure and Environment
3	<b>Muslim Religiosity and Personality Indexing (MRPI), UPM</b>			
	Islamic worldview (51 items)		Religious personality (100 items)	

Source: MUDI Report (2014), MRPI (2006), MSI (2015)

Nevertheless, the indicators are skewed towards the current aim and objectives of its specific organization, thus opening rooms for improvement. MUDI in particular could be improved by basing its indicators on the five essentials of *Maqasid al-shari'ah* namely faith, self, intellect, posterity and property to provide more comprehensive and justified evaluation. Though the MSI is already based on these five essentials of *Maqasid al-shari'ah*, it is a study on the government policies whether or not they are *shari'ah* compliant. If it is affirmative, the government wants to see the level of achievement and if not what are the steps to improve. This effort is commendable since it elicits further actions to scrutinize each sector of the study in the quest for people's wellbeing. In consequence, MRPI serves a tool to assess the first essential of the *Maqasid al-shari'ah* that is the religiosity dimensions. MRPI worked this out through its 51 items under the Islamic Worldview values and 100 items under the Religious Personality values. However, the challenge remains for the items to be able to reflect each of the Islamic basic principles of *Islam*, *Iman* and *Ihsan* forcefully.

In summary, the religious dimensions in the existing Malaysia indexes of wellbeing appear either directly or indirectly that could be traced by virtue of their names. The earlier batch i.e. MWI, MFWI and MURNInets considered the religious dimension in a rather non-specific and superficial way while the second batch comprising MUDI, MSI and MRPI dwelled with them quite directly and specifically. All three latter indexes portray Islamic-oriented indicators. On the contrary, the fallacy of the MWI is quite obvious when the indicators used did not reflect the cultural component as defined by the document. MFWI and MURNInets, though attempted to include religious dimensions but gave inadequate emphasis on them.

### Conclusion

In Islam, religion contributes to human wellbeing tremendously by way of spiritual dependency to the Creator, Allah SWT that is constantly manifested in religious practices, behaviours and way of life. This relationship is evident when the three Islamic-oriented indexes i.e. MUDI, MSI and MRPI are strong in their direct Islamic content (though within their limitations aforesaid highlighted). However, in contrast to the conventional worldview human wellbeing indexes, the religious content could be either indirect or superficial like those of the MWI, MFWI and MURNInets. Hence, for the latter, there are rooms for improvement within the perspectives of *Maqasid al-Shariah* where indicators pertaining to the protection of faith, life, intellect, lineage and wealth could be embedded to make the measurement of human wellbeing indicators more comprehensive and justified. Finally, the religious dimension is found important in promoting liveability, quality of life and human wellbeing at all levels i.e. from individual, family, community and cities. This study found that religiosity could be measured via specific measurement tool like MRPI and should be widely applied especially in Malaysia where Islam is proclaimed as the official religion and majority of its population are Muslims.



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