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MEDIA RELEASE

Study Reveals Malay/Muslim Community is Concerned About Cost of Living and Family Cohesiveness

1. A new study commissioned by AMP Singapore has revealed that while the Malay/Muslim community is generally happy with the significant gains it has made over the last decade, they are concerned about the cost of living and the impact growing affluence is having on cultural ties and family bonds. Other areas they have concerns about include employment opportunities, support in education and Muslims in leadership positions.
2. The sentiment study, which was conducted by independent research agency, Blackbox Research Pte Ltd, was aimed at studying the current perceptions of the overall Malay/Muslim community towards issues of society, education, economy and community leadership. The survey was conducted with a total of 930 members of the Muslim community via face-to-face interviews, 38 grassroots activists via online interviews and 9 thought leaders in the community via in-depth interviews from July to October 2020. More details on the study can be found in the Annex page.

Cost of Living

3. The study showed that although most respondents said they are doing fine financially (89%), about half of them (52%) cited cost of living as a top priority for them. 40% said that they were dissatisfied with the general cost of living and among those who were not doing well financially, 60% attributed it to the rising cost of living.

Family

4. Family is an important area for many in the community, with 88% respondents saying the community still values family ties. However, younger Muslims (44%) place less emphasis on family values, and this is a concern for activists and community leaders who worry about the erosion of close family bonds, which is seen as crucial to community cohesiveness.

Employment

5. In the area of employment, only slightly more than half (54%) of the respondents agreed that Muslim Singaporeans receive equal employment opportunities and career prospects as other Singaporeans. A similar proportion (55%) believe they are able to get employed for the desired role which they are qualified for. A majority of the respondents (74%) agreed that more attention is needed to ensure the community achieves career success. The type of help highlighted includes guidance on job-related skills or skills upgrading, job search assistance, subsidies during unemployment and networking.
6. Nevertheless, the community leaders interviewed said that with less emphasis on 'hard skills' and more prominence now being given to creativity and flexible thinking, this presents an opportunity for the community to strive in the new economic environment. According to them, there also seems to be a stronger drive amongst youths to progress in their careers.

Education

7. Most respondents (79%) opined that more support, such as financial aid, motivating Muslim students to aspire for academic excellence, and enrichment programmes, is needed for Muslim youths to excel academically.
8. Most parents (79%) also feel that they need more guidance in understanding the different educational pathways and which one is best suited for their child. The top barriers for these parents in guiding their children include lack of time, unsure how to help their children with their studies and financial inability.

Leadership

9. Political and social engagement in the community is moderate, with 49% of the community respondents saying that they keep themselves updated on changes to government policies. However, younger Muslims (52%) are the most engaged and updated group.
10. Although more than half (51%) of the Muslim community believe there will always be sufficient talent to ensure a renewal of high-quality community leaders, only 43% say they are aware of inspirational leaders across the community, while only 38% believe there are sufficient Muslims currently in leadership positions.

11. “We hope that the findings of this study will pave the way for further discussion within the community as well as at the national level on how we can help the community with the rising cost of living, employment opportunities and education support. The study also shows potential areas of collaboration between AMP and other community organisations such as in strengthening family values in the community and bolstering support to develop more leaders in the community,” said Mr Mohksin Rashid, Executive Director of AMP.

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AMP MUSLIM COMMUNITY SENTIMENT STUDY

Key Findings

Note: Findings are based on survey with Muslim community respondents only due to sample size.

Demographics – Muslim Community

Gender	Male	464	50%
	Female	466	50%
	Total	930	100%

Age	Youths (15 – 35)	321	35%
	Adults (36 – 64)	309	33%
	Elderly (65 & above)	300	32%
	Total	930	100%

Housing Type	HDB 1-2 room	191	21%
	HDB 3 room	162	17%
	HDB 4 room	217	23%
	HDB 5 room/Exec	141	15%
	Condo & Private flat	120	13%
	Landed property	99	11%
	Total	930	100%

Monthly Household Income	Under \$2000	305	33%
	\$2000 – \$4999	308	33%
	\$5000 – \$8999	190	20%
	\$9000 – \$14999	94	10%
	\$15000 & above	33	4%
	Total	930	100%

Marital Status	Single (never married)	191	21%
	Married	687	74%
	Widowed	15	2%
	Divorced/ Separated	37	4%
	Total	930	100%

Have Children	Yes	693	75%
	No	237	25%
	Total	930	100%

No. of Children	2 or less	360	52%
	3 or more	333	48%
	Total	693	100%

Educational Level	No Formal Education	PSLE	Secondary Education	A-Level/ IB	ITE/ NITEC/ Higher NITEC	Polytechnic/ Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Post-grad Degree	Total
	52	164	303	32	119	175	79	6	930
	6%	18%	33%	3%	13%	19%	8%	1%	100%

General

- Community is happy with the significant gains made over the last decade but shares wider national concerns on cost of living and the impact growing affluence is having on cultural ties and family bonds.
- Key concerns amongst the community in 2020 are cost of living, family, and income levels.
- Family is a pressing topic for many in the community. Growing affluence, changing lifestyles and greater affinity with peers over cultural belonging are all seen to be having an impact on family cohesiveness and Muslim values.
- Family remains a top priority for the Muslim community.
 - Top 3 priorities: Family (49%), Financial Stability (48%), Work-life balance (24%)
 - Top 3 concerns: Cost of living (52%), Family (35%), Income (23%)

Education

- 77% believe that Singaporean Muslims enjoy equal opportunities in education.
- However, majority seek more support to achieve academic excellence. 79% agree more support is needed for Muslim youths to excel academically.
- Types of support required:
 - 44% Financial Aid
 - 43% Motivate Muslim students to aspire for excellence in their education
 - 42% Enrichment Programmes
- Parents seek more guidance to help direct better outcomes for their kids. 79% agree that parents need more guidance in understanding the different educational pathways and which one is best suited for their child.
- Top barriers for parents:
 - 34% Lack of time
 - 32% Don't know how to help their kids with studies
 - 28% Financial Inability

Economic

- A majority of Muslim Singaporeans say they are doing fine financially (89%) with only one in ten indicating they are not doing well.
- Among those who believe that they are not doing well financially, cost of living is a major concern. Cost of living increases is a major concern as they are for the wider Singapore community.
 - Among those who are not doing well financially, 3 in 5 attribute it to the rising cost of living.
- 52% cited cost of living as their top priority
- 40% are dissatisfied with the general cost of living

Employment & Career

- There is an emergence of a middle class with more Malay professionals and female participation in the workforce.
- With less emphasis on so called 'hard skills' and more prominence now being given to creativity and flexible thinking; community leaders feel this presents an opportunity for Muslims to strive in the new economic environment that is emerging.

- Strong creativity is a springboard for success across multiple fields, e.g. music, F&B, art, design, business, and entrepreneurship.
- There is also a stronger drive amongst youths to progress in their careers.
- However, overrepresentation of lower income individuals remains a persistent issue.
- Perceptions of equal employment opportunities in the Muslim community lag behind education.
 - 54% agree that Muslim Singaporeans obtain equal employment opportunities and career prospects as other Singaporeans.
 - 55% agree that Muslim Singaporeans are able to get employed for the desired role which they are qualified for
 - 74% agree that more attention/help needs to be given by the Muslim community to ensure that Muslims achieve career success.
- Career help needed:
 - 66% Providing guidance on job-related skills/ skills upgrading
 - 58% Job search assistance
 - 57% Subsidies during unemployment
 - 41% Networking

Families

- 49% of the community mentioned that family is a priority in life:
 - 44% Youths, 50% Adults, 54% Elderly
- Overall, family remains priority but less among younger Muslims.
 - 88% agree that the community still values family ties.
 - However, younger Muslims place less emphasis on family values, and this is a concern for activists and community leaders who worry about the erosion of close family bonds, which is seen as crucial to community cohesiveness.
- Although Muslim females enjoy greater workforce participation in 2020, majority of the community believe that females in Muslim homes are still expected to take up a larger share of household responsibilities.
 - 75% (3 out of 4) agree that Muslim women take on a larger proportion of household responsibilities after marriage.
- One third don't believe that single mothers get the same family support as single fathers.

Leadership

- Although more than half (51%) of the Muslim community believe there will always be sufficient talent to ensure a renewal of high-quality community leaders, only 43% agree say they are aware of inspirational leaders across their community, while only 38% believe there are sufficient Muslims currently in leadership positions.
- Majority feel that there is less inspirational leaders and not sufficient Muslims at leadership positions.
 - 62% did not agree that there are sufficient Muslims in leadership positions.
 - 57% are not aware of any inspirational Muslims leaders/role models.
- 49% keep themselves updated on changes to government policies. Younger Muslims are most engaged and updated on changes in government policies.

- By gender: 50% Males, 44% Females
- By age group: 52% Youths, 50% Adults, 40% Elderly
- Majority (51%) are confident that there will always be Muslims who are qualified or talented enough to ensure constant renewal of leadership.