



AMP 4TH NATIONAL
CONVENTION

**IDEATING
STRATEGIES
FOR OUR MUSLIM
COMMUNITY'S
FUTURE**

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CONVENTION

IDEATING STRATEGIES FOR OUR MUSLIM COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

15 October 2022 | MAX Atria @ Singapore Expo

Guest of Honour

Mr Lawrence Wong

Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister for Finance

AMP
SINGAPORE

ima

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AMP Singapore
1 Pasir Ris Drive 4
#05-11
Singapore 519457

Email: corporate@amp.org.sg Website: www.amp.org.sg

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SPEECH BY AMP SINGAPORE CHAIRMAN

The following is the text of the speech delivered by Dr Md Badrun Nafis Saion, Chairman of AMP Singapore, at the AMP 4th National Convention.



Dr Md Badrun Nafis Saion, Chairman of AMP Singapore

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh

Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen
A very good morning to all.

Thank you so much for joining us here today on a Saturday morning for our 4th National Convention.

We are heartened to be in the company of like-minded community leaders and advocates at our event today.

Let us begin proper by reciting *Surah Al-Fatihah* with the intention that Allah bless this gathering and He guides us in our speech and action. *Al-Fatihah*.

The AMP Convention – A Tradition

A model organisation in community leadership. That is the vision of AMP and our National Convention is an integral part of our work. The Convention by AMP is a tradition that has spanned three decades where we mobilise professionals, practitioners, activists, and those with a heart for the community to gather and think of strategies and solutions for the challenges faced by our Muslim community.

The tradition began 32 years ago, with our very first Convention, which was attended by 500 professionals who wanted to play a part in the thought leadership of the community. Back then, the Malay community was plagued by many issues, including poor performance in education, high divorce rates, drug addiction issues, and so on. The Convention offered a platform for these

issues to be discussed and debated and solutions to be proposed. It is important to note that the formation of AMP was the direct result of the very first Convention in 1990.

Three decades later, the essence of the Convention remains. It was and still is a platform for us to collectively brainstorm for ideas for the community to help them face the challenges ahead.

Tribute to Our Founding Members

In planning for this Convention, we remember the efforts of those before us, who had the same passion and desire as we do to see our community thrive. We are deeply grateful to our founding members, many of whom are here with us today. They are the ones who first mooted the idea of the Convention and kickstarted this enduring effort. We also take this opportunity to remember the late Mr Yang Razali Kassim, who was one of the founding members of AMP and the first Deputy Chairman of AMP. He was also Chairman of AMP from 2004 to 2006. Through the years, he remained involved and concerned about the development of AMP and the community. He regularly met with the AMP Board to share his thoughts and ideas, which we deeply valued.

It is our hope to continue our founding members' legacy with today's Convention. We may have made some tweaks and adjustments, but the objective remains the same. We are here together today because we want to do what we can to help think of ideas and strategies to create a community that is successful, dynamic and thriving.

Trust the Process

Seeing is believing, they say. If that was the case, Singapore wouldn't be where we are today. I would like to encourage us to reflect further on that statement. Perhaps, we need to believe first, before we see the change. Similarly, we must believe in our community. We as community leaders must believe that our Muslim community can and will continue to strive and progress.

Identity and Community Leadership at the Intersections

Our societal challenges have evolved. As a young developed nation, the concerns we experience now have added complexity. The problems we face cross boundaries – ethnic, socio-economic, and religious boundaries, to name a few. Hence, our leaders need to move beyond our own institution's interests, and be able to thrive in this intersectional space. We believe that this is a crucial space that our community leaders must fill.

Being a Muslim is a key aspect of our identity. But we remain cognisant that our Muslim community does not live in a vacuum. We live among fellow Singaporeans and other communities. Hence, we need to be confident of who we are so that we can navigate our relationships well with our Singapore society.

How can we do this? We believe by working on the fundamentals. As community leaders, we can find courage to empathise, collaborate and build alliances better. We can build our competencies to thrive at the intersections.

Convo 4 – A Fresh Approach

This year's Convention takes on a slightly different approach from previous Conventions. In the past, we would come before you to present strategies and recommendations that the panels had already brainstormed. We would then discuss and debate these with you, the Convention participants, to get your endorsement. Our approach is slightly different this time. We want to ideate the strategies and solutions together with you. We want to focus on co-solutioning. We want to hear from you what your real, lived experiences are. We want your expertise, and we ask that you dig deep and share your knowledge with all of us, as we craft the strategies for the community together, as one.

I see many familiar faces here today, many of whom have decades of experience in the Muslim community space. There is much that we can learn from these veterans and I hope they will share their deep knowledge with us. I am also heartened to see newer, younger faces here among us. It is

important for our youths to step forward and share their thoughts with us, about what their concerns are for our community, and about what they want for our community. And when they do, we need to listen to them. After all, they are the voice of our future.

The Importance of Stepping Forward

Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot stress enough the importance of mobilising talents within the community. We need more of us to step forward and give back, especially in the form of thought leadership for the community. This is where the AMP Convention presents a good opportunity for professionals, practitioners, academics, youths and activists, as well as anyone who has an interest in catalysing the progress of our community, to do their part.

I am heartened that so many of you have stepped forward to participate in the Convention and to share your thoughts and concerns. I hope that your active participation in the community will continue. I hope that we will always have a vested interest in our community and remain involved in steering our community's progress in the years and decades to come.

It doesn't have to be in the form of events like the AMP Convention. It could also be in the initiatives that you come up on your own, that serves an unmet need in the community. I have seen many of such initiatives mushrooming over the years. All these efforts, big or small, will contribute to the success of our community, *insya Allah*.

Our Appreciation

Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin our discussions for the day, let me also take this opportunity to record my appreciation for our Guest of Honour, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Mr Lawrence Wong, who will be joining us later in the afternoon.

I would also like to thank our donors and sponsors for their generous contribution. In particular, I would like to thank Salleh Marican Foundation and CIMB, our Diamond sponsors for this Convention. My appreciation also goes out to our panel members who have been integral to the planning of the Convention. They have worked tirelessly, helping us to research, plan, guide and strategise the content for the Convention. They are the ones who have generously shared their intellect and expertise to enable the rich discussions that will take place today. Finally, I would also like to thank our staff who form the backbone of AMP and this Convention, providing support to the Convention panels and who are working hard to ensure today's event impacts our community positively.

With that, I look forward to the honest, frank and thought-provoking discussions later. I am sure you are too. It is my hope that you will find the AMP Convention a useful platform for us to learn from each other and work with each other to strategise for our community.

Thank you.

FOREWORD BY CONVENTION CHAIRMAN



*Mr Hazni Aris, Chairman of AMP 4th National Convention,
Vice-Chairman of AMP Singapore*

The preparation work for this convention took two years, from forming the steering committee and panels to commissioning primary data collection amid the pandemic.

To fully appreciate the rationale for this convention's problem statements, this foreword would be an essential start. It would also be a light summary for anyone looking for an overview of the convention's findings.

The steering committee was conscious of the pandemic's impact on Singaporeans' lives. The

community's well-being was at the forefront of this convention's approach in view of the circumstances. Empathy for affected segments of our Muslim community had to be central in analysing and interpreting data. Empathy was emphasised throughout the panel sessions as participants collectively brainstormed solutions to issues. This helped everyone stay focused on the human element of recommending any solutions instead of quickly jumping into problem-solving mode based on hard data.

A sense or snapshot of the Singapore Muslim community today can be achieved by referring to recent data from the Census of Population 2020. The Census of Population done decennially has been the cornerstone in providing the context and snapshot of the Muslim community at each convention. Such data has been pivotal in shaping recommendations in all AMP conventions. For this convention, the 2020 Census provided interesting insights and posed new questions on emerging trends.

Staying true to the theme of empathy for this convention, another data source is in-depth interviews and focus group discussions conducted by the panels. They provide insights into thoughts and feelings behind quantitative data. Here, the steering committee specifically targeted segments of the Muslim community identified as underserved or important to the community's future.

The insights from the 2020 Census are organised along three areas: Islam (as a cultural identifier), achievements (education and academic) and socio-economic.

Islam continues to play a significant role in shaping the outlook and values of the Singapore Muslim community.

Population Size of Muslims in Singapore as of 2020

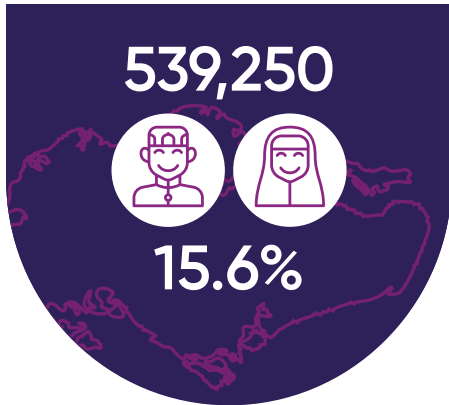


Fig. 1: Population size of Muslim resident population in Singapore as of 2020¹

The Singapore Muslim population today makes up 15.6% of Singapore's total residential population – slightly more than half a million. This is a slight increase in proportion from 10 years ago when the Singapore Muslim population stood at 14.7%.

Racial Breakdown of Muslims in Singapore Population in 2020 (Above 15 Years Old)

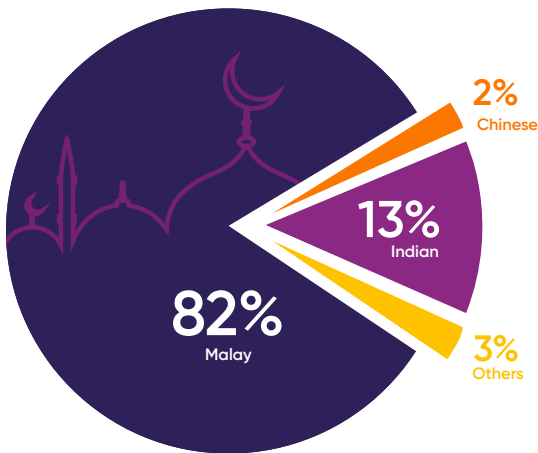


Fig. 2: Racial breakdown of Singapore Muslim resident population in 2020 (above 15 years old)²

82% of the Muslims are ethnic Malay, followed by ethnic Indian, largely unchanged over the last 10 years. This majority representation sets the context with which many Muslim organisations influence or determine existing policies and likely those in the near future as well.

Percentage of Muslims across the Races in Singapore in 2020 (Above 15 Years Old)

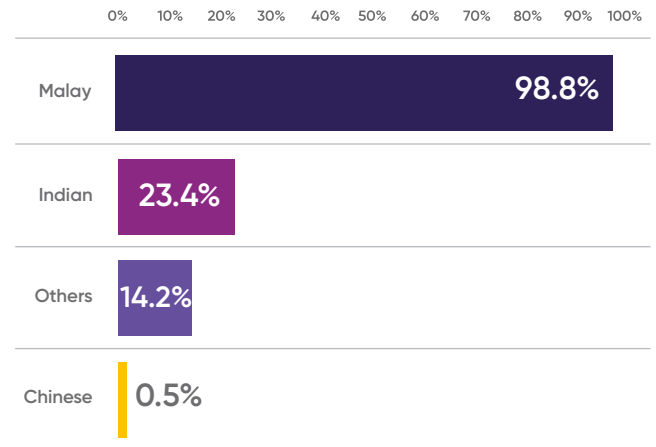


Fig. 3: Percentage of Muslim resident population across the races in Singapore in 2020 (above 15 years old)³

Interestingly, observations of religious affiliation within each ethnic group from the 2020 Census data showed a noticeable change from 2010. Muslims in the ethnic "Others" group increased from 9% to 14%, and amongst the Chinese from 0.4% to 0.5%. Even though the compositions appear stable, the observed micro-shifts could change how the Muslim community conducts its affairs in the next 10 years.

Religious Composition in Singapore in 2010 and 2020

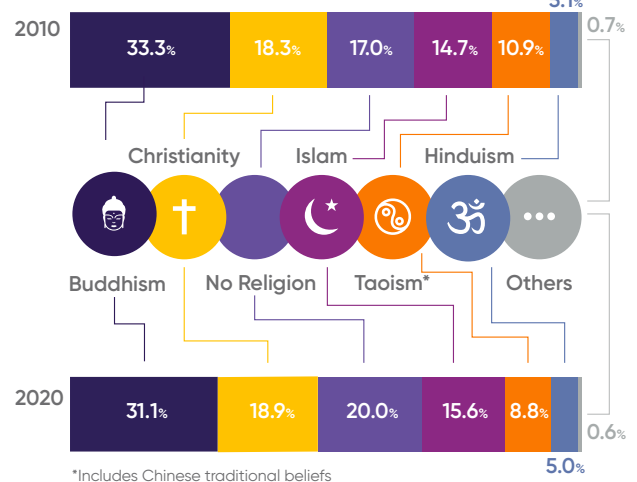


Fig. 4: Religious composition of resident population in Singapore in 2010 and 2020⁴

Today, 1 in every 5 of the Singapore resident population identify themselves as among those not subscribing to any religion. With the exception of Christianity and Islam, there is generally a decrease

¹ Singapore Department of Statistics. (2021) Singapore Census of Population 2020, Statistical Release 1.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

in proportion of adherents from other religions. The data infers a downward trend in religious affiliation in general and a harbinger to changing social norms and values.

Such analysis demonstrates existing knowledge gaps. Thus, deeper probing of Census data is required to better understand trends and what's happening on the ground. There is a demographic dividend of having more Muslims in the youth population, particularly those aged 34 and younger.

Distribution of Muslims in Singapore by Age Group and Gender

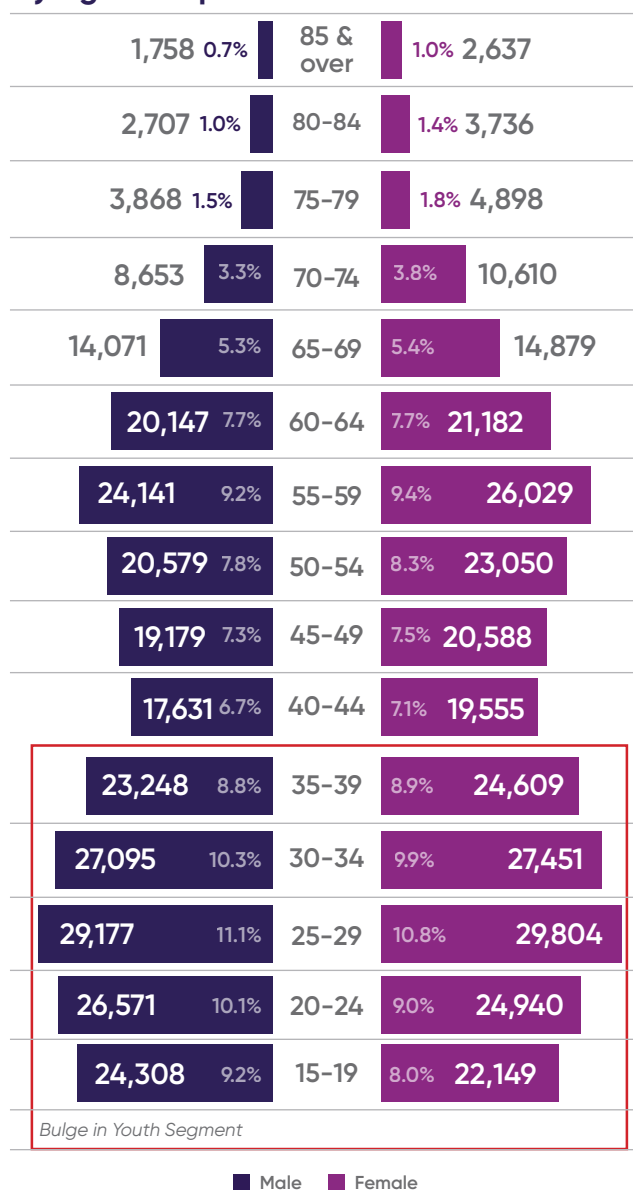


Fig. 5: Distribution of Muslim resident population by age group and gender in 2020⁵

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Although Muslims make up 15% of the population on average, among resident youth, Muslims make up a significant 20%, around 211,000. Hence, Muslim community leaders have this golden opportunity to sow and build on this latent talent pool so they can be leaders of their cohort. These data points were beacons that guided the steering committee to explore areas of concern for youth at the convention.

Religious Composition of Youth Aged 15 to 34 in Singapore

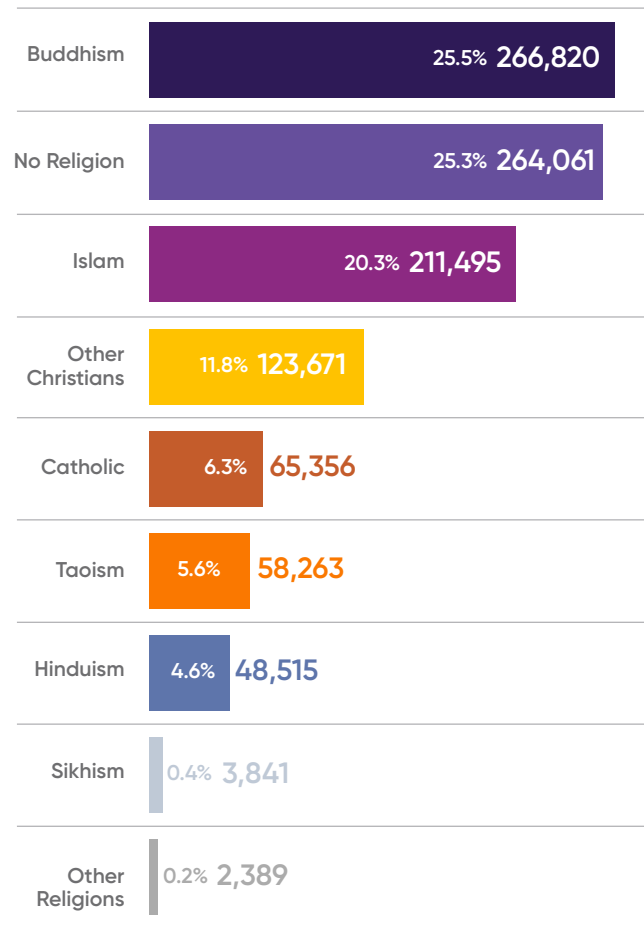


Fig. 6: Religious composition of resident population youth aged 15 to 34 in Singapore in 2020⁶

This also influenced the steering committee's format and approach to the convention. It was designed to attract youth participation in navigating the future they want for the community.

Youths who have completed tertiary education or are working are emerging professionals. Muslim organisations would be eager to reach out to them in programmes or recruit them as volunteers.

Breakdown of Muslim Youths in Singapore by Age and Gender

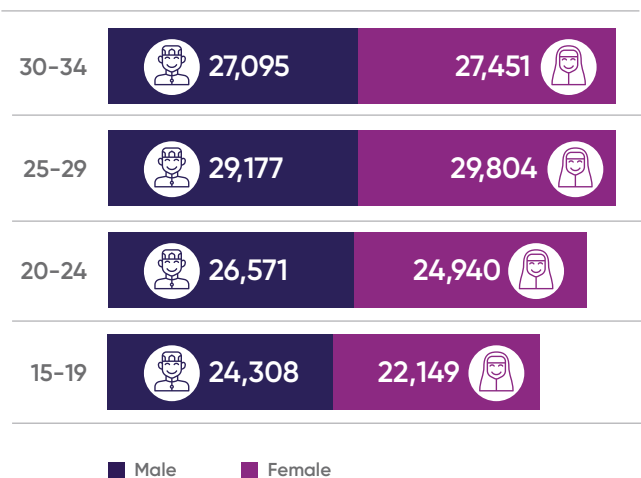


Fig. 7: Breakdown of Muslim resident population youth by age group and gender in Singapore in 2020⁷

If we delve deeper into the youth category of 15 to 34, we will find the age bracket of 25 to 29 forming the biggest segment. However, the steering committee realised a gap in understanding their motivations, such as their life stage priorities. Statistics from the Registry of Muslim Marriages (ROMM) show that the average ages of Muslim grooms and brides are 29 and 27, respectively.

This implies that, other than a career, building their young family is a priority. Thus, there is a need to probe deeper to understand their busy schedules, how they can become more involved in community affairs and the kind of programmes they would find value in from Muslim organisations. Putting

themselves in the community's shoes enabled a more empathetic approach. Hence, more time was spent understanding the circumstances of community segments.

Highest Qualification of Muslims in Singapore in 2015 and 2020

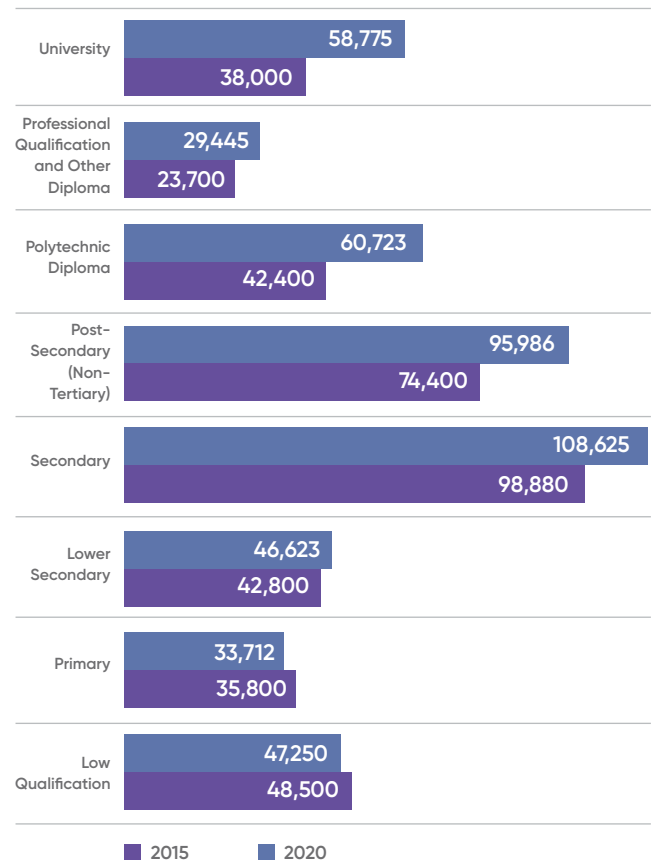


Fig. 8: Highest qualification of Muslim resident population in Singapore in 2015 and 2020⁸

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

On the academic front, Census data reveals there are almost 59,000 Muslim graduates in 2020 as compared to only 38,000 back in 2015. This 20% increase is worth celebrating, considering the laudable effort put in by Muslim organisations and families over the years. However, Muslims with a diploma and above represent approximately 31%, which is still lower than the national average of 45%. There are also questions whether Muslim graduates face challenges in getting employment.

Highest Qualification Attained by Gender among Muslims in Singapore

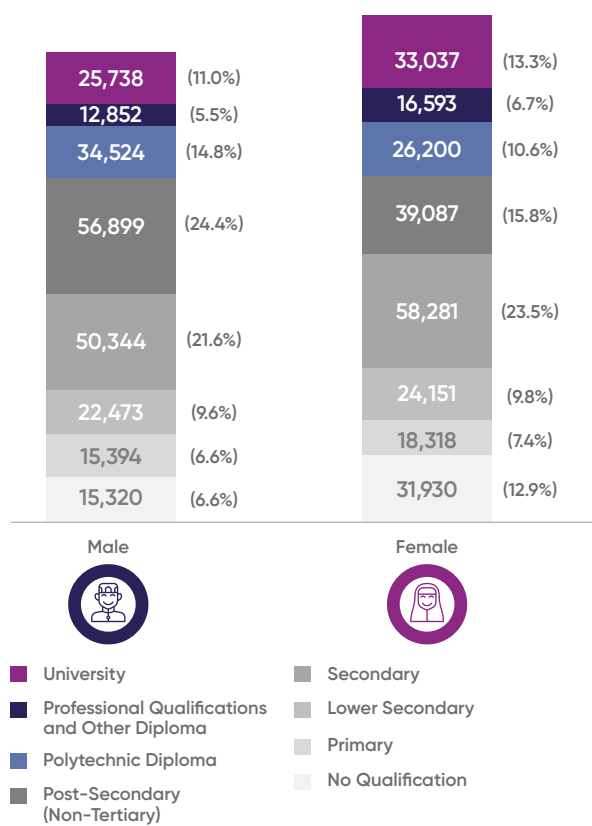


Fig. 9: Highest Qualification attained by gender among Muslims in Singapore in 2020⁹

The other data point worth noting is academic achievement by gender. There are 7,299 more Muslim women than men with a university degree. Therefore, empirically, more Muslim women should be in positions of influence and leadership in the community. The steering committee, however, could not determine if this gender breakdown corresponds to their leadership roles in the workforce and in community organisations.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Singapore Department of Statistics. (2021) Singapore Census of Population 2020, Statistical Release 2.

Average Household Income by Ethnic Group in 2020

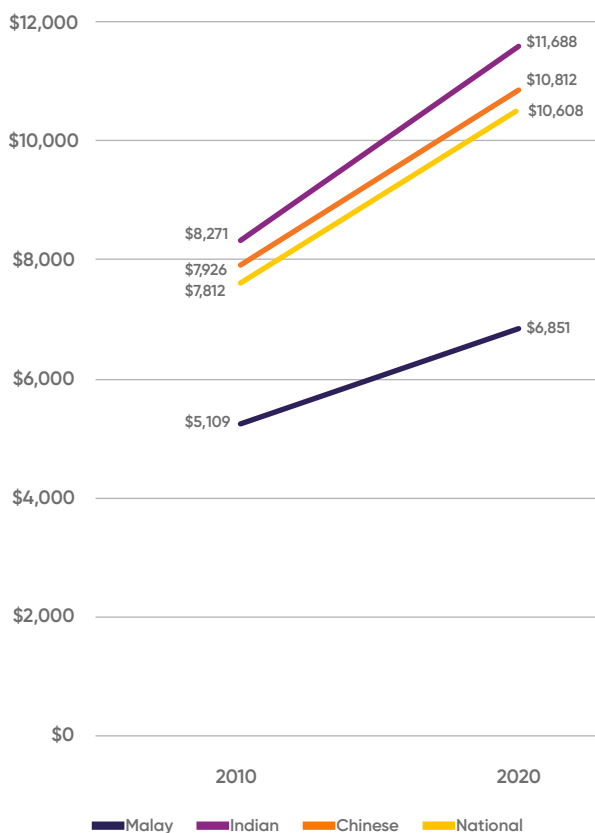


Fig. 10: Average household income by ethnic group in 2020¹⁰

The impact of the increased number of Muslim graduates could be evaluated by average income data. The Department of Statistics collects income data based on race rather than religion. Where 82% of Singaporean Muslims are ethnically Malay, it can be inferred that the majority of Muslims here earn significantly below the national average, at \$6,851 compared to the national average of \$10,608.

Despite progress on the education front, it has not translated to economic gains in uplifting household income. Median household income growth is the lowest amongst Malays compared to the other ethnic groups. Hence, while education is one of the solutions to uplift socio-economic conditions, community leaders are challenged with the question of what other aspects matter in realising social mobility.

Median Household Income by Ethnic Group in 2020

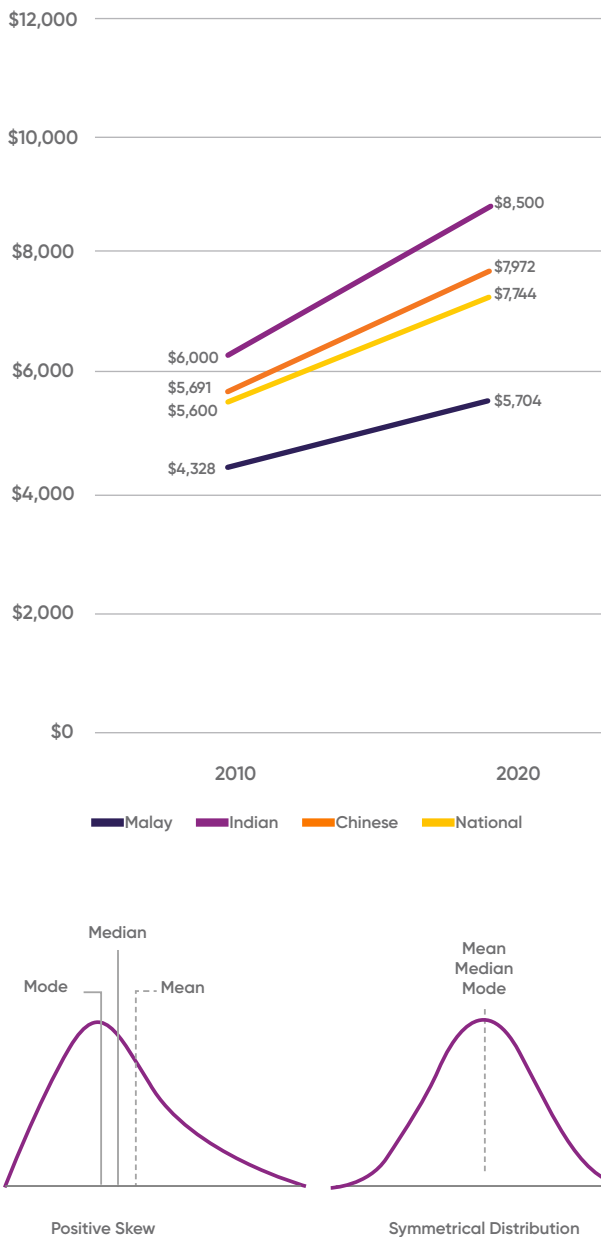


Fig. 11: Median household income by ethnic group by household reference person in 2020 ¹¹

A statistic of note is that the median income of Malays (\$5,704) is lower than the average or mean income (\$6,851). This means more are earning around the lower median income. Income inequality becomes apparent when the top earners make significantly more than the majority lower-wage

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Economic Survey of Singapore 2021, Ministry of Trade and Industry.

earners in the Muslim community. This topic on income inequality warrants a thorough study on its own since education upliftment alone seems insufficient to improve the situation. One possible starting point to unravel this problem is exploring industries where salaries differ.

Malay Representation by Industry



Fig. 12: Malay representation by industry ¹²

The top four industries with the most Malay workers are transportation and storage, administration and support services, public administration and education, and health and social services.

Main Drivers of GDP Growth in 2021

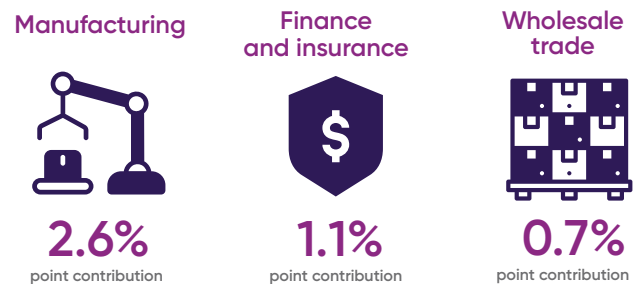


Fig. 13: Main drivers of gross domestic product growth in 2021 ¹³

Based on data from the Ministry of Trade & Industry, in 2021, the main drivers of the Singapore economy were manufacturing, finance and insurance, and wholesale trade.

As a community leader, the first thing to mind may be to aggressively drive more diploma and university graduates in the Muslim community and ensure they jump into the growing industries. While pursuing the straightforward problem-solving mode may be tempting, the steering committee hypothesises that Muslim community members

have other priorities defined by cultural and religious values beyond material pursuit. This exemplifies a knowledge gap and a need to understand the Muslim community better. This way, solutions would cater to what is important to their values.

Zakat Collections from 2016 to 2020

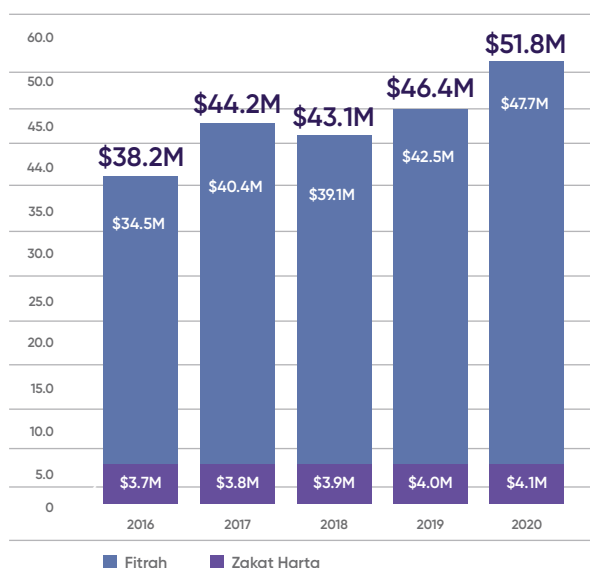


Fig. 14: Zakat collections from 2016 to 2020¹⁴

An example of values-driven behaviour in the Muslim community is the increase in Zakat contribution by 36% from \$38 million to \$51 million over the last five years.

Median Household Income Growth

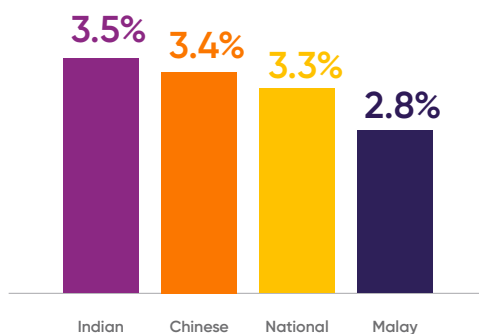


Fig. 15: Median household income growth by ethnic group by household reference person in 2020¹⁵

Only about 30% of the population earn slightly higher than the median income due to tertiary

qualifications. Further, the median income of Malay households only grew by 2.8% over the decade, the lowest across the ethnic groups. While Indian Muslims may earn slightly more, they only account for around 20% of the Muslim population. Despite the lack of education and income, the continued growth of Zakat contribution may be explained by the high regard placed on religion and charity as a means of giving back to the community.

Census data points provide a still snapshot of the community. Community leaders can make inferences about the needs and devise interventions based on the data. However, the Census only gives clues about the values and belief systems. For example, if decisions on resource allocations for social programmes were purely based on hard data, the bulk would go to youth development since youths form the biggest percentage of the Muslim population.

Seniors, categorised as those aged 65 and above only make up 12% of the Muslim population compared to the national average of 15.2%. Therefore, it would be rational for community leaders to defer ageing issues in the Muslim community until it is at par with the national level. Hence, there was an internal discussion between AMP's Board of Directors and the steering committee on whether to begin the conversation on seniors in this convention or defer it to the next convention.

Our Asian and Islamic values guided the decision to include conversations on seniors at this convention. The steering committee hypothesised that Muslim households are less likely to place their seniors in care facilities. The community tends to hold strongly to the value of filial piety and self-care for the elderly. The steering committee deliberated on the challenges seniors will face within the next 10 years.

Stepping ahead of the anticipated challenges, the convention could be used to get community leaders and concerned individuals to come together and co-create solutions to current and upcoming challenges.

¹⁴ Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, (2020). Resolved: Steering Forward as A Community in the Face of Challenges. MUIS Annual Report 2020. p. 56.

¹⁵ Singapore Department of Statistics. (2021) Singapore Census of Population 2020, Statistical Release 2.

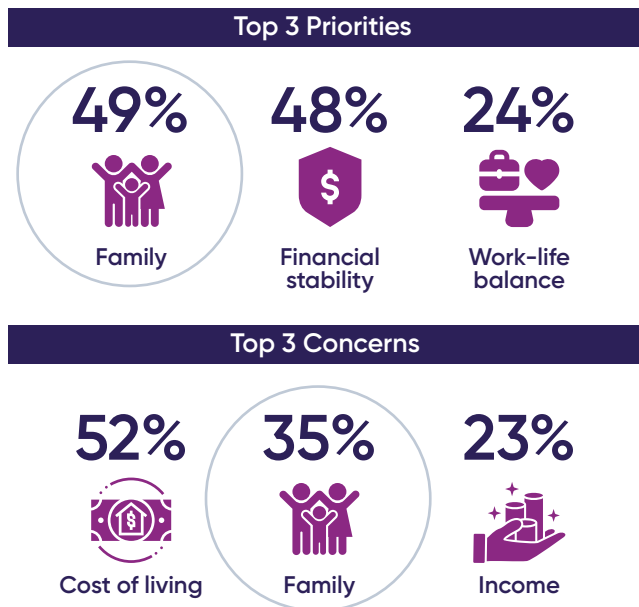
To do this, the steering committee concurred on the need for more varied data from the community to uncover the underlying concerns and hopes of families, youth, seniors and community advocates, who will be the conscience and voice of the community.

To begin the data collection process, AMP commissioned research works from BlackBox and MyFinB. BlackBox conducted a perception survey on the Muslim community and AMP in 2020. They spoke with close to 1,000 Muslim respondents from July to August 2020. It was a similar approach to the one done for the 3rd convention but adapted due to the pandemic. Some interviews were conducted face-to-face, while some others were done virtually with the assumption that responses between both approaches would be similar.

Generally, the community's views and perspectives were sought on issues categorised into six pillars – from education to economic well-being and employment.

Top Priorities and Concerns Discovered

Muslim Community



Community Leaders



Fig. 16: Top priorities and concerns of the Muslim community and community leaders

The findings were also categorised based on two groups within the community: 1) general members of the Muslim community and 2) community leaders. From there, comparisons between the views would signal the gap between the concerns of community leaders and the general populace.

Family was a top concern for the public and was a top priority for both community leaders and the public. The study also found that 88% of the respondents agree on the importance of family ties. These were the clear indicators that the steering committee needed to focus on the family during this convention.

Areas of Concern Shared during the Study



88%

agree that Muslim families value family ties



7 in 10

agree that Muslim women usually shoulder the family's health and wellbeing



74%

of respondents feel more attention or help is needed for the Muslim community to ensure that Muslims achieve career success



Less than 4 in 10

feel there are sufficient Muslims in leadership positions

Fig. 17: Areas of concern shared in the Blackbox study

Additionally, 7 out of 10 felt Muslim women are responsible for caregiving. This suggested the need to discuss gender roles and reconcile with educated women in leadership positions in the workplace or community organisations.

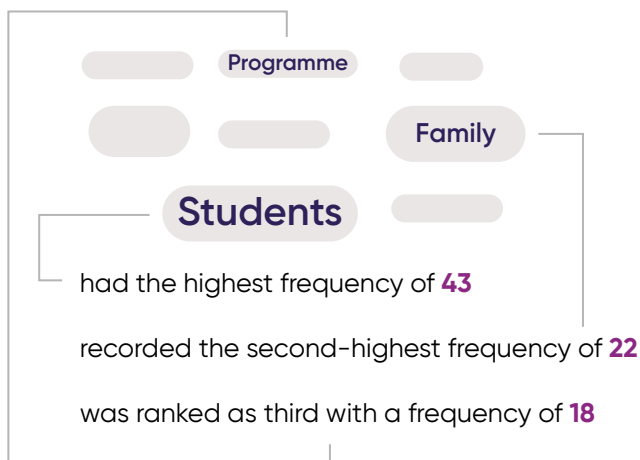
Finally, the study suggested the community's desire to see more successful Muslims in well-earning careers and leadership positions, with 4 out of 10 feeling there are insufficient numbers presently. This expectation would have a bearing on Muslim youth to do well in life and become leaders as a positive inspiration to their families and the community. At this point, the youth segment becomes a consequential area of concern to the steering committee in exploring their challenges to achieve success and take up leadership positions.

MyFinB's research aimed to decode the community's sentiments regarding socio-economic issues. This is done by scanning and analysing reactions over 10 years (2010-2020) from mainstream sources and social media sources like Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp groups using their artificial intelligence (AI)-powered tools. This new approach is used to understand the

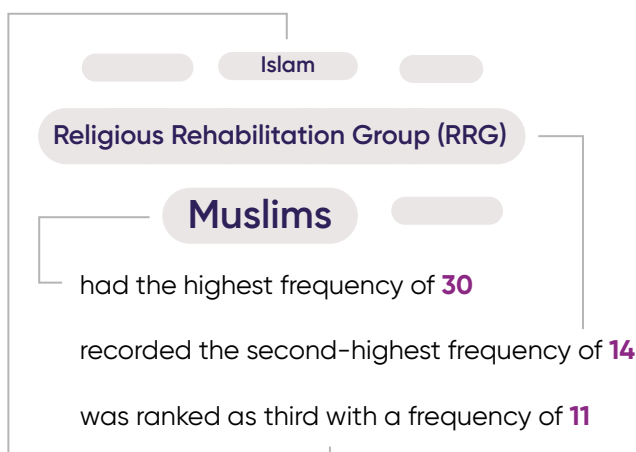
thoughts and feelings of the community, as many people communicate their views and opinions online. Spanning more than 60,000 articles, 6,000 social media posts and 15,000 online discussions, the research revealed insights on the key topics or issues "talked" about online relating to the Muslim community.

AI Key Findings: Top 3 Recurring Topics

EDUCATION



ISLAMOPHOBIA



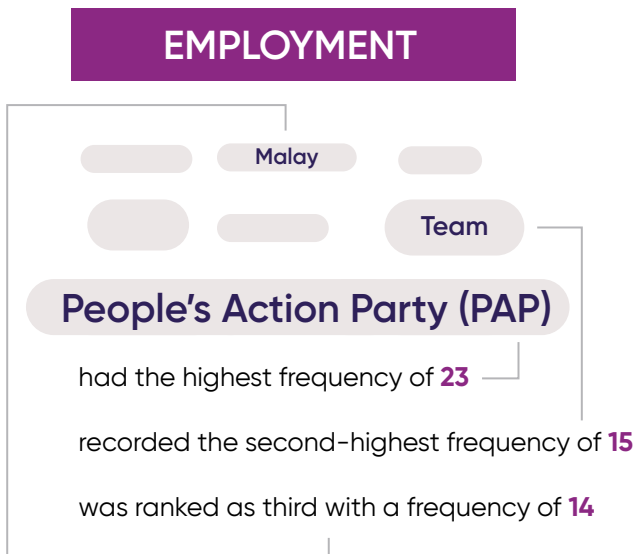


Fig. 18: AI key findings: Top three recurring topics

Their analysis identified three recurring themes: education, Islamophobia and employment.

Education and employment concerns surfaced consistently in the past decade, in sync with concerns about the cost of living in the BlackBox study and the income inequality observed in the Census. The linking of students and families with education by their AI engine further corroborated the steering committee's hypothesis of selecting youth and family as segments to focus on in the convention.

Over the last 10 years, Islamophobia has been heightened. This is likely due to the news reports on terrorist-related events over these years. Recurrent discrimination based on race or religion, locally and abroad, could only hint at how attuned Singaporean Muslims are to their identity and sensitivity to social justice and equity in areas of employment and their place in Singapore society.

2 New Findings from the AI Study



The state of affordability for eldercare services is the most requested for improvement (87%).



Majority (85%) are concerned about mental health issues experienced by members of the Muslim community

Fig. 19: Two new findings from the AI study

Two new findings from the research by MyFinB were the concern about the affordability of eldercare facilities and mental health issues. Though these topics are not widely discussed in public forums or focus areas of most Muslim community organisations, they appear to be discussed online. Mental health in the community is not typically considered of high importance and may even be taboo. Thus, without this approach, the steering committee would not have been able to determine the gravity of the community's concern on the topic.

Areas of Concern Identified



Fig. 20: Areas of concern identified

The steering committee found many pain points in the community from these two research initiatives. They realised that some of these issues overlap and some are complex and intertwined. There was debate about how to address some of these issues and solutions for them.

The Census and the two research projects AMP commissioned provided valuable data and insights into the Muslim community. It was apparent that issues like cost of living overlap with issues of employment and academic achievement. An intertwining of community segments, from families to students to workers, made defining an approach for the convention challenging. Past conventions had always approached the challenges in the community through separate socio-economic pillars like economics, religion and culture. In this convention, with so much complexity of intertwining issues, we adopted a human-centred design thinking approach that focuses on understanding the community's pain points before devising solutions.

Design thinking challenged the steering committee to view these issues through empathy. Effective solutioning comes from drilling down at specific community segments and how community leaders and organisations can help them rather than developing a generic programme for all.

This Convention: From Issues-Focused to Users-Focused

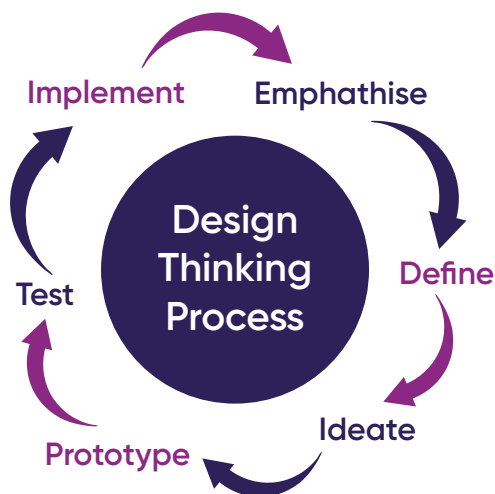


Fig. 21: Design thinking process

This paradigm shift looked at the community as service users of community organisations. Just as we like some mobile apps more than others, some services are more successful because they meet our needs on top of other factors like ease of use, accessibility, etc.

To design a solution for the social issues we intend to address, we needed to understand our users' needs. Aside from fulfilling extrinsic needs such as financial support for a low-income family, we needed to consider their thoughts and feelings, their aspirations and fears. This was done with an empathy map for each of the segments. Only with a holistic understanding of each segment's emotional, social and functional needs would defining problem statements be meaningful. These two steps were undertaken by the steering committee and the panel members whose works expanded on analysis and initial hypothesis from the data collected.

This convention was intended to be the ideation stage of the process, where we engage participants in coming up with ideas based on their understanding of the respective segment and perspectives on the problem statements.

Thereafter, the prototyping stage looked at consolidating these ideas and co-creating viable solutions through programmes or services that will be tested on small sample groups. This approach accepts that the first attempt may not be the right solution. The process is circular, giving space for tweaks before testing these solutions again and gradually rolling them out to a larger part of the community.

It also means that, at any point in time, whether at the empathising, defining, or even ideating stages, there is always an opportunity to take a step back and revisit earlier assumptions, especially if something is not right from the prototyping and testing stages. Being a fluid process, the solutions are constantly improving and evolving so long as they continue to be relevant in addressing pain points.

Applying this concept to the convention started by revisiting the six pillars (healthcare, education, employment, families, culture and religion, and leadership) used in the past conventions and reframing the issues with the segments of the Muslim community. At this stage, the analysis of the Census and research by Blackbox and MyFinB provided directions on how the issues from each pillar were to be matched to the specific community segments.

As a start, the steering committee defined seniors as an overlooked segment of the community – resources, healthcare, and the impact of caregiving by families would be addressed. As for youth, academic achievement and employment are issues of concern. With the proliferation of digital spaces and social media, the steering committee explored how community issues discussed in the past will become decentralised and how more ground-up initiatives will develop in both the physical and digital worlds. Thus, community advocates were identified as a new segment that would champion the community's concerns and be their voice. This is an extrapolation of community leadership issues discussed in past conventions. Finally, the rapid adoption of digital technology in a hyperconnected world impacts families, challenging cultural norms of parenting and Islamic values.

Hence, it can be concluded that whilst data collected and analysed were the key determinants of the segments to focus on for this convention, the individual experiences and anecdotes from AMP's community also played a part in ensuring that relevant nuances are considered.

The commissioned research works regularly hint at the centrality of Islam and its values to the Muslim community. Hence, the steering committee decided that the cultural and religious issues previously discussed in silo in past conventions needed to be relooked. Instead, Islamic values and practices would be evoked in each of the four segments. The steering committee rallied volunteers to form panels for further qualitative research and analysis.

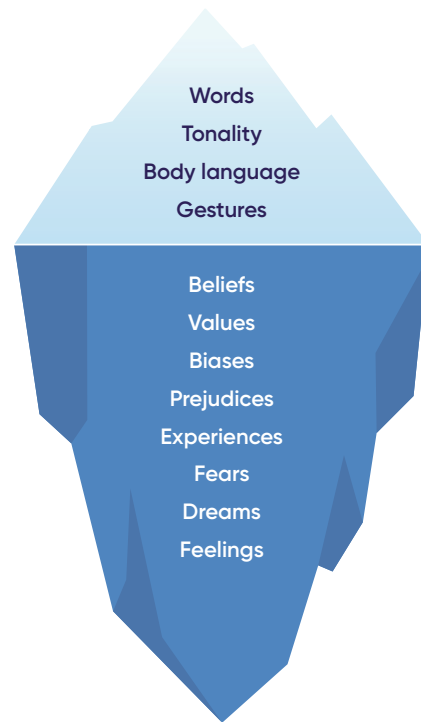
This Convention: A More Human-Centered Approach



With the assistance of a secretariat formed by full-time AMP staff, the panels surveyed 500 people and conducted discussions and interviews with 21. This allowed the panels to uncover experiences,

values and feelings that are otherwise “under the iceberg” (refer to Hemingway’s iceberg theory).

Hemingway’s Iceberg Theory



The findings from the research they conducted added more depth to some of the community issues usually discussed. For some panel members, it challenged their initial assumptions on the issues of the community. For others, it was a discovery of new perspectives that earlier data did not reveal. Unsurprisingly, some surveys and discussions with the Muslim community corroborate earlier assumptions and hypotheses.

A lot of emphasis on empathy was placed in ensuring the panels, in their engagements, always put themselves in the shoes of their target segment. Each opportunity to engage with the participants allowed us to observe and record their current actions in overcoming challenges and hints of unattended cries for help. Each panel was given time to reflect on their findings to arrive at the problem statements and a preamble for participants at the convention to deliberate collectively on ideations.

This Convention: More Empathy-Driven



Observe



Listen



Ask



Do



Reflect

The following sections of this foreword will provide an overview of each panel's key findings and themes. These provided a brief overview of the context during ideation discussions. The bespoke and detailed process of the study done by each panel and the results of the ideations are elaborated in the respective sections of each panel in this convention report.

Youth Panel Findings

- 1 Intergenerational poverty
- 2 Rigidity and lack of understanding from social assistance providers
- 3 Decline in mental health due to lack of stability
- 4 Lack of leadership opportunities for younger Muslims and women

When the Panel spoke to youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds, they felt that their challenges to succeed were not due to the lack of access to quality education but rather social capital and support from the community. They felt the community lacked empathy for their life circumstances. Support from social service agencies was transactional, functional (such as financial assistance), or received only through a government agency referral.

A connected issue is the social stigma attached to their socio-economic status, non-tertiary education or low-skilled/blue-collar line of work. The findings suggest these societal expectations have an

impact on their mental well-being. From the study, it seems youth mental health, just like physical health, is often related to choices dictated by one's socio-economic status and social pressures, and can only be uncovered through an empathetic approach.

On the other end of the spectrum, with a larger pool of tertiary graduates now compared to decades earlier, the Panel uncovered opportunities and obstacles for young Muslims to take leadership positions in community and Muslim organisations. From these findings, two problem statements relating to youth leadership and two relating to mental health were deliberated for discussion in the convention.

Youth Panel Problem Statements

Youth Leadership

- 1 How may we reduce resistance of older board members to provide opportunities for the younger generation?
- 2 How may we capture the interests of youths from different educational backgrounds to be in leadership positions?

Mental Health

- 1 How may we overcome structural issues that impede youths to achieve social mobility?
- 2 How do we help youths facing difficulties with mental health?

The Community Advocates Panel explored the transforming advocacy landscape for the Muslim community and found four key findings. Firstly, the lack of participation of Muslim professionals was due to their perceptions of Muslim organisations. Some respondents viewed incumbent Muslim organisations as invite-only clubs. This perceived barrier of entry means organisations would struggle to attract professionals with skills and expertise that can help them grow and thrive in an increasingly complex world.

Women continue to be stretched with expectations and roles in the family as well as their abilities to contribute to the community. This tension is discussed extensively in the report as the Panel sought a resolution for organisations to harness the potential of talented Muslim women within the cultural context.

The fear of reprisal of being a community advocate was one of the issues that arose in the discussions. Thus, the Panel identified the need for an open and safe space where Muslim community advocates can be heard and not have their views judged injudiciously. One worldview that Muslim community advocates challenge could be meritocracy in its current form. While the system of meritocracy has enabled social mobility since independence, the "lazy native" narrative is still prevalent and intergenerational circumstances may hinder success despite hard work. Advocating for social justice rooted deeply in Islam in Singapore's secular setting would also require wisdom and balance in discussing how to create this open environment.

Compared to decades earlier, social media makes it easier and faster to rally hundreds or millions behind a cause, making it an essential tool for advocacy. However, it can also be a dangerous tool. It can entrench bigotry and intolerance through echo chambers where people only hear from one perspective and, at times, become hostile to the opinions of others online. Blending the religious and cultural context in their research, the Panel explored how Islamic values like mutual respect and the prophet's (*pbuh*) tradition of positive communication between people of differing opinions can be applied universally in Singapore's multicultural context.

Community Advocates Panel Findings

- 1** Need for more participation in community advocacy from the Singapore Muslim community
- 2** Need for greater women representation in community advocacy
- 3** Enabling a more open environment for advocacy

4 Constraints and dangers of community advocacy through social media

Through extensive work, the Panel summarised the key themes into three problem statements. The statements look at addressing obstacles for professionals to give back, facilitating a conducive environment for women advocates and using social media for advocacy based on Islamic ethics.

Community Advocates Panel Problem Statements

- 1** How may we overcome barriers to encourage greater participation among Muslim professionals in the community?
- 2** How may we navigate cultural expectations for Muslim women to be community advocates?
- 3** How may we build on the strengths of community advocates using social media grounded in Islamic values of respect and constructive engagement?

The family is an important institution in the Muslim community, as identified from preliminary research by Blackbox. Research conducted by the panel members further found digital technology and its impact as well as sexuality as key concerns.

The concern about the impact of digital technology on parent-child relationships was one of the main findings from their research. With mobile devices now readily available to children at an early age, there was a concern about the lack of awareness this has on the type of information children can access. Implications on a child's mental and physical development were found where parents are not present or incapable of supervising the child's usage of such devices.

The findings on sexuality are a sensitive and important issue. They show how Muslim parents struggle to find suitable mediums and methods to discuss sexuality with their children. This becomes problematic in this age, especially when information is so readily available. Children may seek such information online from undesirable sources or those not in line with their family values.

Because the modern sexuality discourse has become complex and highly contentious, families seem to be seeking help navigating issues faced. From the Panel's research, there is a call from Muslim parents to see Muslim organisations provide guidance, support and resources based on Islamic teaching.

Family Panel Findings

- 1 **Impact of technological disruption**
- 2 **Facilitating technological awareness**
- 3 **Role of parents in supervising technological usage**
- 4 **Sexuality as a fear-inducing topic**
- 5 **Role of parents in sexuality education**
- 6 **Sexuality education as firmly rooted in religious doctrine**
- 7 **Sexuality as a discourse is complex and highly contested**

They have narrowed down two problem statements regarding the challenges of digital technology usage and supervision. Problem statements related to sexuality centre on communication issues and community support or resources.

Family Panel Problem Statements

Technology

- 1 **How may we help parents maximise the gains and reduce the dangers of technological use?**
- 2 **How can parents help children be less reliant on digital devices for entertainment and education?**

Sexuality

- 1 **How may we help parents to be open to talk about sexuality based on Islamic teachings?**
- 2 **How may we mobilise community resources to build a holistic framework on issues of sexuality?**

The Seniors Panel was formed as a forward-looking study on specific issues related to Muslims ageing in Singapore. With no precedent from past conventions, the panel relied on the expertise amongst themselves and developed the hypothesis through surveys and engagements with other organisations already in senior care.

Amongst the findings were the financial, social and emotional challenges faced by caregivers of the seniors. Generally, Muslims are not aware of caregiving services and support available. This is unsurprising as there are very few conversations in the Muslim community on ageing issues in public discourse, with youth and other social issues frequently taking the limelight.

Affordability and proximity to the home are important factors for caregivers to explore engaging senior services centres. The religious and cultural dimension of the research was evident when findings corroborate a desire for cultural sensitivities in these senior service towards the needs of Muslim seniors, from activities and diet to language used.

Finally, ageing, end-of-life topics, filial piety and caregiving are seen as private and internal family affairs that the community shies away from seeking help for or having open discussions about. There is a need to encourage more Muslim professionals today to advocate for specific concerns and issues their Muslim seniors face. This would not only be an act of respect and gratitude to the earlier generation but also set in motion thought leadership on specific ageing issues Muslims face. With improved lifestyles and better healthcare, the community's demographic dividend will become a silver tsunami. Thus, the Panel feels it is better for

the community to discuss and act now rather than later.

Seniors Panel Findings

- 1 Knowledge of caregiving challenges but not how to overcome them**
- 2 Operations of senior services: more cultural sensitivity, closer proximity to caregivers, and affordability**
- 3 More Muslim activities and reduced language barriers**
- 4 Advocacy role within Muslim community**

The Panel's three problem statements intend to address different stakeholders for senior care, namely the caregiver, existing senior care operators and Muslim organisations.

Seniors Panel Problem Statements

- 1 How may we ensure that caregivers are aware of the resources they can tap on to reduce some of the burdens of caregiving?**
- 2 How may we prepare current eldercare facilities to meet the needs of the growing Muslim elderly population in the near future?**
- 3 How may we facilitate Muslim organisations to discuss openly on eldercare challenges?**

This convention took place at the nexus of a global pandemic amidst major shifts in socio-cultural and geo-political landscapes. The Muslim community has progressed academically, with more having a tertiary education compared to decades earlier. However, it continues to lag in the economic front, in terms of income. Nevertheless, the community's commitments to their faith and family are clear in the studies AMP conducted preceding the convention.

A human-centred design thinking approach in this convention is a progression from the past conventions. Embedding the socio-economic topics in the four target segments – youth, family,

community advocates and seniors – allowed a holistic and empathetic look at their challenges and aspirations.

The panels' findings may be expected in some areas but uncomfortably candid in others. Being empathetic and open during the research provided rich material. The steering committee hopes they will help participants of the convention ideate solutions to some of the challenges in the problem statements.

This convention was not intended to provide the answers the community will set forth to pursue. Rather, it was a bold attempt to engage community members in our identified segments from the very start in defining pain points and engage the professionals, community leaders and advocates for a dynamic Muslim community to come together and co-create innovative solutions. Nothing describes this strength of solidarity in the Muslim community here better than this sacred verse from the Quran:

"(O you who believe) . . . help one another in piety and goodness and do not help one another in sin and aggression"

- Surah Mai'dah, Verse 2

May the Convention and its subsequent efforts pave the way for all of us to be among those who help the community and one another in goodness, *insya Allah*.

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

INTRODUCTION

The Community Advocates Panel consists of five panel members:

1. **Mohamad Hairil Johari**, member of AMP Singapore Board of Directors, and Senior Academy Officer at the Physical Education and Sports Teacher Academy of the Ministry of Education
2. **Nailul Hafiz**, CEO and Principal Consultant of Asian Leaders Institute
3. **Dr Walid Jumblatt Abdullah**, Assistant Professor at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs in Nanyang Technological University (NTU)
4. **Nor Lastrina Hamid**, Sustainability Advocate and Co-Founder of Singapore Youth for Climate Action
5. **Nur Suliani Md Noor**, Co-Founder of Kowabunga! Global Pte Ltd

The panel members first convened in January 2022. They conducted extensive discussions and analysed the results from the Blackbox Perception Survey and sentiment analysis by My FinB, both of which were commissioned by AMP, and the Singapore Census of Population 2020 report to identify the various problems, issues, definitions, complexities, and personalities involved in the matter at hand.

Following the discussions and analysis, the Panel highlighted the following as this paper's main objective: **support for Muslim professionals to play more significant roles in strengthening communities.**

The secondary objective involves **encouraging Islamic values in promoting advocacy.** Before proceeding with discussing the objectives, it is worthwhile to discuss some fundamental questions:

- Who is a community advocate (CA)?
- Why does the community need more advocates?
- What are the different communities within the muslim community?
- What are Islamic values (the Panel is fully aware of the tensions between Muslims who have different ideological bents, each claiming to be closer to representing Islamic values)?

Definition of Community Advocates

This paper considers a community advocate (CA) as someone who uses his or her voice and/or position to pursue the betterment of the Muslim community. In a way, every person is an advocate, in line with the Prophetic tradition that "Every one of you is a leader"¹.

For this paper's purposes, however, advocates are those who explicitly champion causes for Muslims. The term "Muslim professionals" refers to individuals

¹The *hadith* is reported in Sahih Muslim as follows: "Beware. Every one of you is a shepherd and every one is answerable with regard to his flock. The Caliph is a shepherd over the people and shall be questioned about his subjects (as to how he conducted their affairs). A man is a guardian over the members of his family and shall be questioned about them (as to how he looked after their physical and moral well-being). A woman is a guardian over the household of her husband and his children and shall be questioned about them (as to how she managed the household and brought up the children). A slave is a guardian over the property of his master and shall be questioned about it (as to how he safeguarded his trust). Beware, every one of you is a guardian and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his trust." See: "Sahih Muslim, Book 18, Hadith 29a." *Sunnah.com*, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:1829a>. Accessed 1 August 2022.

who are successful in their respective fields and possess the capacity to advocate, support, and give back to the community; CAs are individuals who speak and work on issues and causes related to the local community.

It is not a requirement that these individuals or groups be attached to any Community and Muslim Organisations (CMO), as they can start their own ground-up initiatives². A few sub-categories of advocates have been identified:



While the focus is on the first three categories, references will be made to political advocates – Muslim politicians – as and when necessary.

The Need for Community Advocates

Why does the Muslim community in Singapore need advocates? It is the complex nature of modern and social life that no one can be an expert on everything. For instance, someone extremely well-versed in business dealings may be a novice in the socio-political scene. Having advocates who deal with various spheres of life concerning the Muslim community would be needed to fill in the knowledge-information gaps. Having more advocates would be useful for the following reasons:

1. There may be specifics that apply to Muslims which may not be particularly obvious to non-Muslim advocates. Business advocates, for instance, would have to contend with Islamically-sound and permissible ways; social advocates would have to consider the sentiments of various groups within the community, and so on.
2. The Panel strongly believes in the marketplace of ideas – the more advocates there are, the better the competition, and hence, the best ideas would emerge.

3. Practically, no single advocate, even within a sphere, can cover all the needs and aspirations of the people within that group.

Diversity of the Muslim Community

From the outset, the Panel acknowledges that even the term “community” can be a contradiction. Within the Muslim faith there exist various “communities”, with multiple sub-identities under the umbrella of the “Muslim community”. These include:



RACE/LANGUAGE

Even though most Muslims in Singapore are Malays, a sizeable number are from other communities (Indian, Arab, and others).



CLASS

The various strata have completely different experiences, in some cases. The COVID-19 pandemic had brought this to the fore in the most apparent ways. One example would be when many upper/middle-class Singaporeans called for more restrictions and tighter measures because they could work from home, whereas those from the lower economic strata of society could not do so.



GENERATION

Just like in other communities, younger Muslims may or may not share similar ideational beliefs with their elder counterparts.



IDEOLOGY

- *Various denominations within the Muslims:* Sunni-Shia, but more significantly in our context, traditionalist/Sufi-Salafi
- *Liberal-conservative divide:* Of course, this is to be viewed as a spectrum and not as a dichotomy, but it is important to acknowledge the existence of vastly different views among Muslims to begin with

²Hamid, Nur Lastrina. “Strengthening the Role of Singapore Muslim Professionals in Community Advocacy.” *The Karyawan*, 15 July 2022.

To complicate matters, each individual is the sum of all their identities, hence it is not always easy to neatly categorise a person. At the same time, this results in two outcomes:

1. Their experiences may differ despite their commonality of being Muslim
2. What qualifies as "Islamic values" may greatly differ among Muslims

As such, when discussing the sub-objective of encouraging Islamic values in promoting advocacy, a minimalist understanding of Islamic values is recommended – one that allows more inclusivity of the various strands of Islamic understandings.

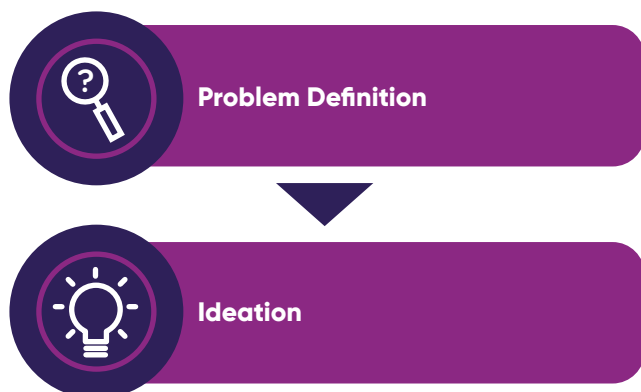
Essentially, this study analysed values which are acceptable to Muslims across the ideological spectrum. This principle was also applied to advocates with different ideological bents in discussions.

The Panel acknowledges that the choice of Muslim professionals as the unit of analysis for the main objective is a little restrictive since they are part of the upper/middle-income category. However, it is maintained as a gauge for the paper.

The Panel further emphasises that the Islamic values to be discussed will be useful for advocates.

Paper Outline

This paper adopts a qualitative approach conducted in two phases:



The initial phase was designed to accurately define the scope. It aimed to identify challenges impeding Muslim professionals from enacting more effective community advocacy, and to outline inclusivist Islamic values.

The findings were analysed and used to develop problem statements and questions for the ideation phase. Subsequently, the ideation phase was designed to identify potential solutions to the defined problem statements.

The subsequent sections will outline the methodology, findings, and recommendations of each phase.

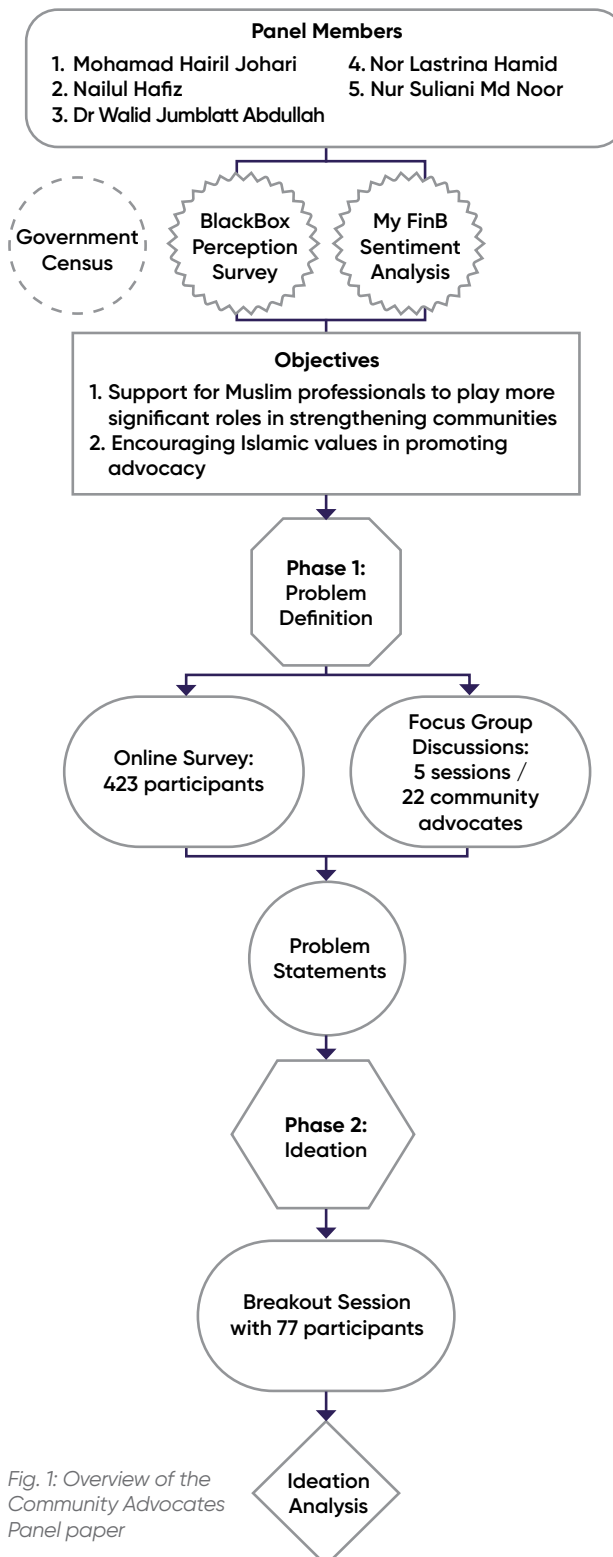


Fig. 1: Overview of the Community Advocates Panel paper

PROBLEM DEFINITION

To accurately scope the problems faced by Singaporean Muslims in pursuing and executing advocacy work, an online survey and five Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted. This process was necessary to avoid analyses that may be projections and therefore out of touch with actual ground realities. This section will outline the methodology, its key findings, and the problem statements derived therefrom.

Methodology

Online Survey

Convenience sampling was applied for the online survey, involving 432 respondents. The Panel is aware of the drawbacks of this method; however, the number of participants is believed to be large enough to mitigate the method's shortcomings.

The majority of respondents had at least a Diploma or above (86.1%). Income levels were diverse, although the majority had a household income of \$3,000–\$4,999. In terms of gender, 52.3% of respondents were male and 47.7% were female.

Survey questions were constructed to explore current perceptions of the Muslim community about relevant aspects of community advocacy in Singapore. The questions were categorised into nine thematic sections:

1. Basic personal information
2. Changing values
3. Defining "success"
4. Giving back to the community
5. Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs)
6. Community advocacy
7. Social media
8. Role of women
9. Future of the community

Focus Group Discussions

Five FGDs involving a total of 22 community advocates (CAs) were conducted. Muslim advocates selected were from different ideological groups and had in-depth understanding of the communities in which they operate. Each session

was with four to six advocates, lasting for about two hours. The following themes were discussed:

- The role of community/Islamic values in community advocacy
- Strengthening the role of Muslim professionals in community advocacy
- The role and impact of social media in community advocacy
- The role of women in community advocacy

Key Findings

Online Survey Results

1. While 39% believed that things have generally improved for the community in the last five years, 36% believed things have stayed the same; 25% believed things have become worse.
2. While 64% were slightly optimistic about the future of the community in the next five years, 17% were very optimistic, and 19% were not optimistic.
3. At least 66.7% of respondents perceived the following values to be traditional community/Islamic values: strong family ties; respect for elders; moderation; religiosity/strong religious faith; humbleness; avoiding immoral acts; and giving back to the community. Furthermore:
 - An overwhelming proportion (over 72%) perceived family ties; respect for elders; religiosity/strong religious faith; humbleness and avoiding immoral acts as traditional community/Islamic values.
 - Approximately 42% of respondents felt that the weakening of religiosity/faith were the two most concerning trends.
4. Respondents were most concerned with the weakening of religiosity/faith, followed by the weakening of strong family ties and the decreasing respect for elders.
5. Identified as key values were strong family ties; giving back to the community; and strong religious faith. These values were perceived to help the community progress and/or succeed in the future.

- Although approximately 42% believed that none of the Islamic values actually hinder progress, some 23% felt that values such as religiosity, avoiding immoral acts and observing traditions have hindered progress, to some extent.
- Almost all respondents (95.8%) believed it is important to give back to the community (53.7% strongly agree, 42.1% agree), with 76.1% agreeing that the community still values doing so.
- On whether there are sufficient opportunities to do so, 72.2% affirmed so.
- While 43% of them serve the community through monetary donations, 25% do it through volunteerism; 17% through food distributions; and 14% through mentorship (Figure 2).

Serving the Community

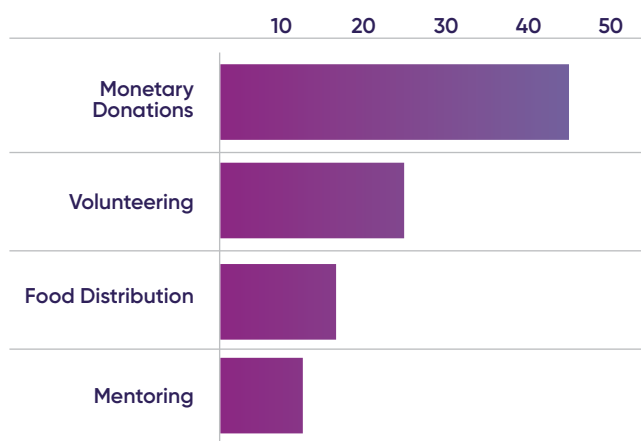


Fig. 2: Percentage of participation in community service

- The majority were likely to do so seasonally or monthly, and would usually serve the community through personal networks and other non-profits in equal proportions, followed by Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) and mosques in almost equal proportions as well.
- When asked about areas in which CMOs have been most effective in, 60.4% felt that they have been effective in providing initiatives to the community that target their needs; 40.5% felt that they have been effective in providing religious guidance for the community; 39.4% in collaborating with one another to benefit the community; 29.3% in providing a voice for the community; 25.7% in providing thought

leadership for the community; 21.3% in influencing government decisions.

Muslim Organisation's Area of Effectiveness

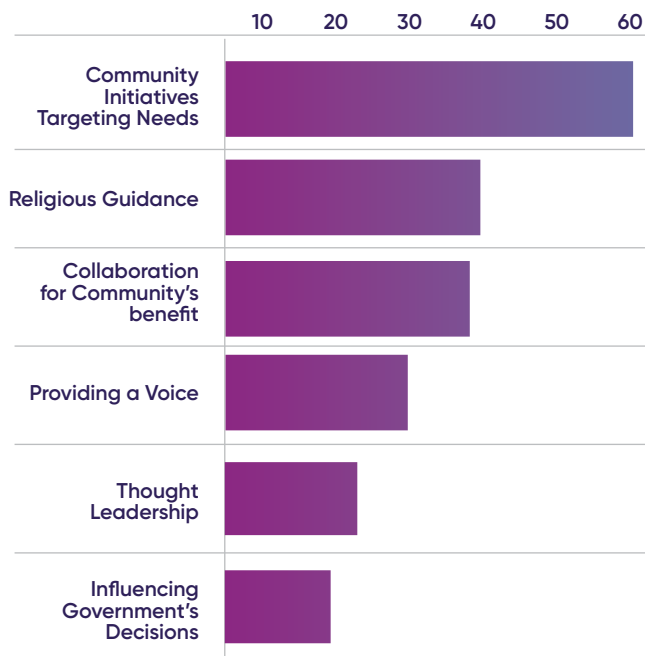


Fig. 3: Perception of Muslim organisations' effectiveness in different areas

- Two key areas which respondents believed CMOs should improve the most were in providing a voice for the community and in influencing government decisions, followed by – in equal proportions – collaborating with others to positively influence the community, as well as providing thought leadership to the community.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents (87.7%) felt that community advocates (CAs) and political leaders are equally important in bringing about positive change, and ought to work together for the best possible outcome (85.9%).
- Some 57.4% of respondents believed there is sufficient talent to ensure a renewal of high quality CAs.
- Also, 33.6% believed there are enough Muslims stepping up to advocate for the community; 35.2% remained neutral; 31.2% disagreed.

Focus Group Discussion Findings

Islamic values:

- These values are typically universal, but, for the advocates, what distinguishes one value from

another is purpose, which is the execution of values for the sake of the one true God.

- Values such as justice, integrity, accountability, wisdom, patience, empathy, selflessness, and hope should be at the forefront of the advocate's work.
- A Muslim should be emotionally and spiritually resilient.
- More critical thinking among Muslims is needed.

Muslim professionals' involvement in advocacy:

- Muslim professionals do not join CMOs for various reasons.
 - Time
 - Perceptions of them being in an old boys'/ girls' club

Women as CAs:

- Many institutional/cultural barriers exist for women, influencing their decisions to become CAs.
 - Husbands need to support their wives more.
 - There is a need for more male allies.
- More women are needed on the Board of Directors (BODs) for CMOs and also other organisations.

Problems facing CAs or potential CAs:

- Culture of paranoia
 - People are afraid to be known as an "activist" because of fear of political reprisal
- Tendency for concerns to be dismissed by those in authority
 - "Oh this is not a problem in Singapore."
- Internalisation of stereotypes within the community may affect advocacy.

Social media:

- A great tool for advocacy
- We must be mindful of the pitfalls of social media
 - Narcissism, self-aggrandisement
 - Antagonistic behaviours
 - Echo chambers

A perpetual issue:

- How broad should our spectrum of acceptability be?

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

To define the problem statements for this paper, an analysis of the above findings was conducted. The discussion on this analysis can be found in Appendix A titled *Community Advocates Panel Problem Definition Phase – Discussion of Findings*. Through this analytical process, five problem statements were outlined, and two themes emerged: **Barriers Against Community Advocacy** and **Advocacy on Social Media**. The following are the problem statements and respective ideation questions:

THEME 1:
Barriers Against Community Advocacy

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

1

The Muslim community in Singapore perceives a need for more CAs. However, factors such as lack of time, perceptions of rigidity in CMOs and fear of reprisals hinder Muslim professionals from stepping forward.

Guiding Questions during Ideation

How do we overcome these personal and perceived barriers (e.g., lack of time, desire for autonomy, and rigidity in Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs)) to encourage greater participation among Muslim professionals in community advocacy?

What Islamic values should be promoted in strengthening advocacy among Muslim professionals, and how should they be introduced and implemented?

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

2

Muslim women today carry the burden of multiple socio-cultural expectations: being expected to work while juggling responsibilities at home. There is also some negative perception towards women who choose to be homemakers. These expectations hinder their effective participation in community advocacy.

Guiding Questions during Ideation

How can society support women's decisions in engaging in community advocacy?

Can Islamic values be used to redefine/navigate cultural and societal expectations of Muslim women?

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

2

The design of social media may cause individuals to remain in their own circles, engaging mostly like-minded individuals. This may hinder constructive discussions on complex issues that cross diverse interest groups.

Guiding Questions during Ideation

How can we overcome echo chambers to unite the community on complex and potentially divisive issues?

Which Islamic values can be encouraged to overcome these issues, and how?

THEME 2:

Advocacy on Social Media

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

1

Social media provides an environment that breeds narcissism – an inflated sense of self-importance and entitlement – potentially affecting how advocacy is carried out. As a result, individuals may be more interested in social media likes and shares rather than actual advocacy work.

Guiding Questions during Ideation

How do we encourage effective advocacy on social media despite this challenge?

Which Islamic values can be encouraged to overcome these issues, and how?

How do we build on the strengths of Community Advocates (CAs) using social media in Singapore?

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

3

There is a lack of *adab* or etiquette when conversing online. There is a need to "agree to disagree" and be "passionate without being disrespectful" to have constructive discussions.

Guiding Questions during Ideation

How can we foster the culture of respectful and constructive online engagements?

Which Islamic values can be encouraged to overcome these issues, and how?

The above problem statements were addressed at the ideation phase.

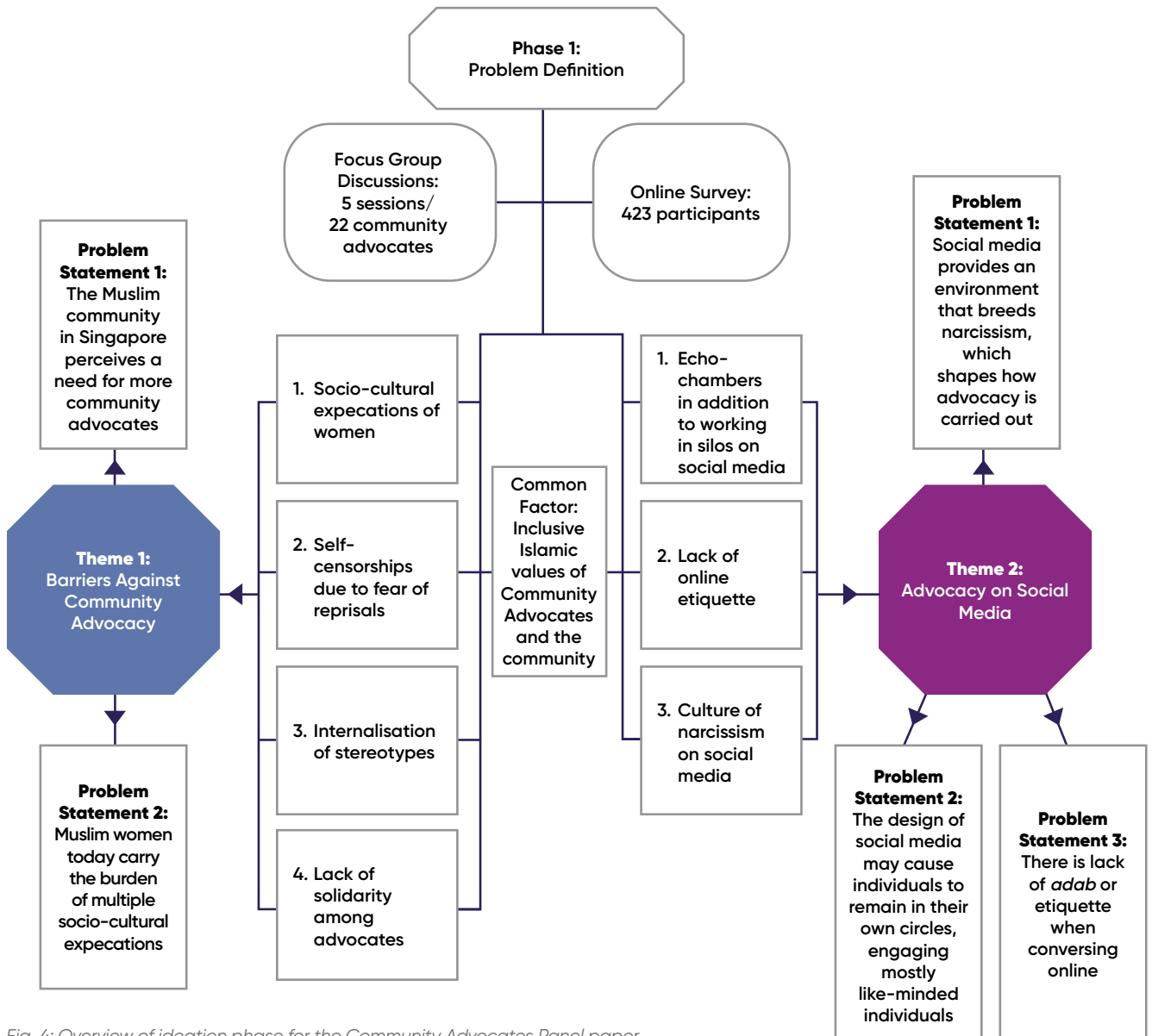


Fig. 4: Overview of ideation phase for the Community Advocates Panel paper

IDEATION

To identify potential solutions to the defined problem statements, a breakout session was conducted. This section will outline the session's methodology, key findings, and ideation analysis.

Breakout Session Methodology

A total of 77 people participated in this panel's breakout session. Participants were divided into

two groups and seated in tables of seven. Group A ideated on theme 1 and group B ideated on theme 2. Each table was assigned a facilitator and a scribe. Participants were briefed on key information pertaining to the problem statements and ideated for approximately two hours.

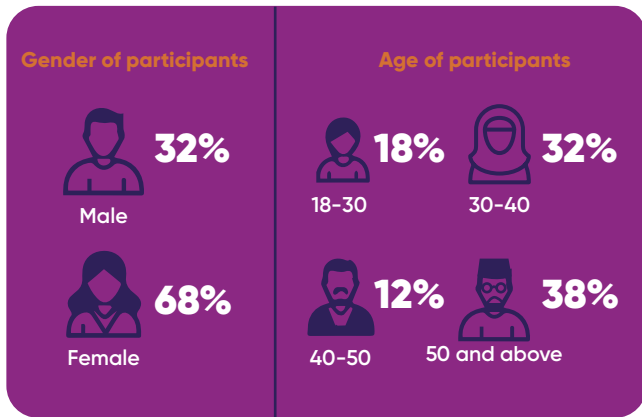


Fig. 5: Demographic information of breakout session participants

The ideation process for each problem statement included four phases:

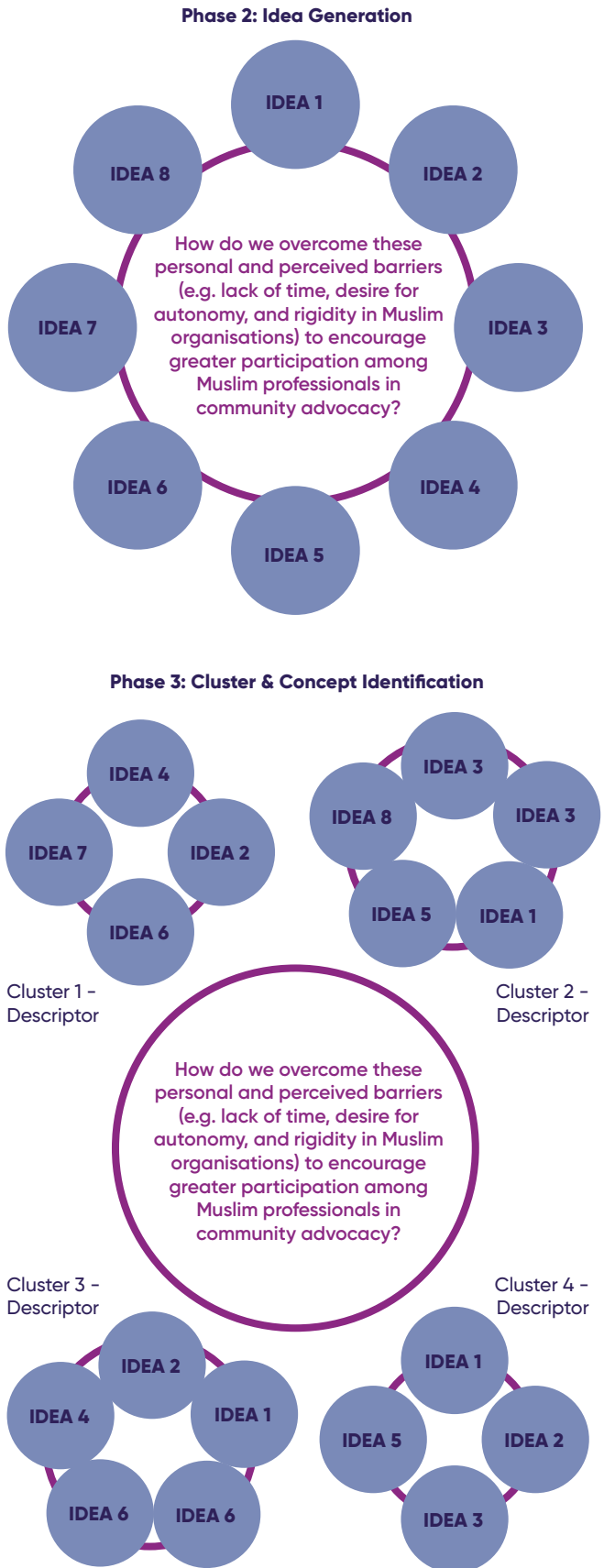
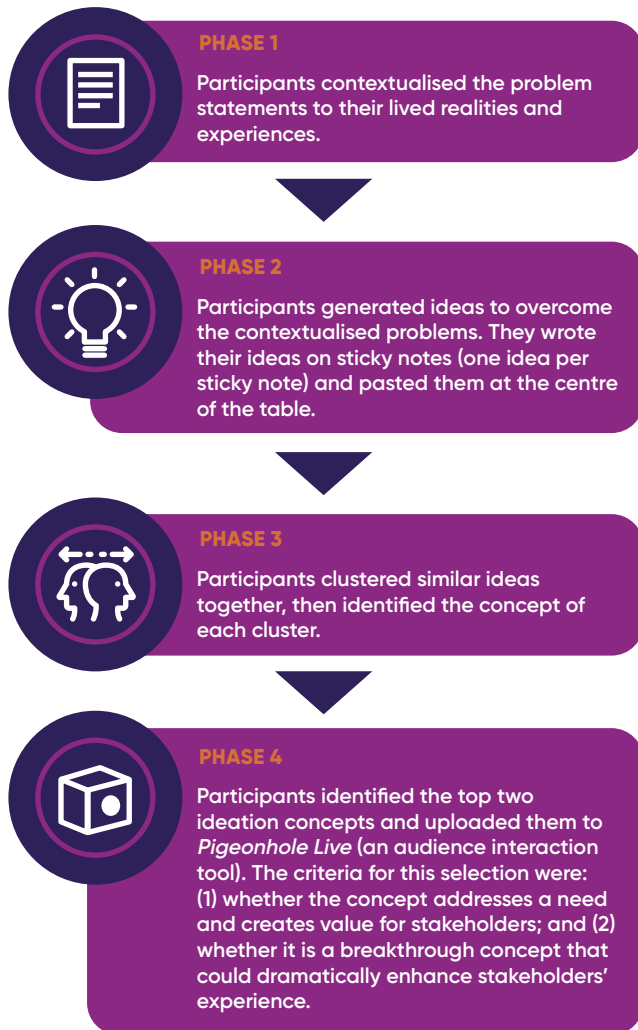


Fig. 6: Phase 2 and Phase 3 ideation process

Barriers Against Community Advocacy

PROBLEM STATEMENT 1:

The Muslim community in Singapore perceives a need for more community advocates (CAs). However, factors such as lack of time, perceptions of rigidity in Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) and fear of reprisals hinder Muslim professionals from stepping forward.

Three forms of barriers against community advocacy were derived from this problem statement: structural, perceptual and individual barriers.

1. Structural Barriers

Institutional Barriers - the need for self-censorship and strategic advocacy in Singapore has led to a lack of visible advocacy work – this reduces youths' accessibility to role models, mentorship, and inspiration. The issue of over-regulation in advocacy work was also mentioned. Participants highlighted the need for more effective reconciliation between maintaining transparency (to prevent misuse of funds/corruption) and protecting the dignity of beneficiaries.

CMO Rigidity - three main problems surrounding rigidity within Muslim Organisations were identified:

- 1) Their programmes and outreach do not include enough extrinsic motivation for youths; they do not sufficiently add value to the lives of youths.
- 2) There is an issue of stagnancy due to old leadership styles (top-down approach); inertia against innovation and structural changes; and the lack of understanding on the present needs of the community, its demographics, and overall outlook.
- 3) Inadequate successor planning: new leaders do not receive adequate mentoring to develop a strong foundation of ground experiences; spiritual, mental and physical health; and stable finances.

Infrastructure of Advocacy Space - five areas of infrastructure weaknesses were identified:

- 1) There is an absence of a centralised system – many advocates work in silos or in closed communities; absence of a database of expertise; lack of inter-advocate communication; and lack of resource sharing.
- 2) The current conceptualisation of volunteer work does not cater to the expertise and needs of individuals at different points in life.
- 3) There is a lack of support for CAs in areas such as employment policies, financial resources and childminding services.
- 4) There is insufficient representation of Muslim advocates in non-Muslim organisations to represent the needs of the community, for co-learning, and to access a larger pool of resources.
- 5) There is inadequate engagement with youths – a lack of diversity in youths engaged, and insufficient visible role models and mentors for youths.

2. Perceptual Barriers

Absence of Islamic Worldview - participants highlighted the lack of meaningful understanding of advocacy work through the Islamic lens. Due in part to superficial knowledge of the Islamic worldview/belief system beyond the "what" knowledge (lack of "why" knowledge), i.e., the lack of emphasis on the *aqidah* (*imaan* – conviction) aspect of Islam (soul of Islam) and an overemphasis on the *ibadah*/ritual practices aspect of Islam, there was a resounding emphasis on the connection between sound Islamic worldview/belief system, correct intentions, and more effective and enduring advocacy involvement.

Stigma of Incentivising Community Advocacy - Misuse of the concept of *lillahi ta'ala* was also observed, i.e., advocates have been told they should do advocacy work for the sake of Allah alone and expect only rewards from Him. Hence, they should accept low financial compensation and should not set financial expectations.

Concept of Time, Credibility and Accountability

- the concept of time being limited and insufficient (leading to community advocacy being low on the priority list); the belief that an individual can only become a CA after attaining "credibility"; and the internalisation of accountability to the powerful rather than to the powerless.

Mental Barriers - there are rife misconceptions on the causes of poverty - the myth of meritocracy, a lack of reconciliation between the worldviews of the majority and minority groups in Singapore (a lack of appreciation for the differences), and the baggage of being Malays (internalisation of the "lazy" narrative and Islamophobia, leading to apologist and self-censorship behaviour).

Participants also emphasised Singaporeans' survival mentality as a key psychological impediment. Singaporeans' hyperfocus on establishing financial stability (due to Singapore's high cost of living) prevents them from prioritising the time and energy needed for advocacy work.

3. Individual Barriers

Lack of Advocacy Skill Sets - participants also attributed the lack of relevant skill sets as another barrier against effective advocacy within the community. For example, CAs have inadequate analytical skills; volunteer management skills; awareness and knowledge of stakeholders; and fundraising skills.

Absence of Openness - absence of a co-learning mindset was also observed. Consultation practices within CMOs and between advocates tend to lean towards tokenistic practices without a genuine desire to listen and learn. This is in part due to an enduring top-down management approach and inadequate implementation of *musyawarah* (consultative) values.

Inadequate Knowledge to Navigate the Civic Space - the absence of a centralised system results in many CAs receiving inadequate training to effectively manoeuvre the civic space. What is the boundary of tolerance in Singapore? What will be considered safe and risky? This ignorance causes heightened self-censorship.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

How do we overcome these barriers (e.g., lack of time, desire for autonomy, and rigidity in CMOs) to encourage greater participation among Muslim professionals in community advocacy? What Islamic values should be promoted in strengthening advocacy among Muslim professionals, and how should they be introduced and implemented?

Ideas generated by participants during the breakout session can be thematised into two categories: perceptual change and structural change.

1. Perceptual Change

Re-branding CMOs from "self-help" to "community touchpoint" - CMOs should be rebranded as community touchpoint organisations (rather than self-help organisations) that advocate for the needs of the Muslim community. This is to overcome the "lazy" narrative, myth of meritocracy, crutch mentality and the suppressive moral judgement over CMOs' inability to help the community get out of dire circumstances. Hence, the change involves rechanneling CMOs' purpose from saving the community to uplifting the community.

Create awareness/campaigns on the nuances and intersectionality of problems faced by the Muslim community in Singapore - to overcome the community's superficial understanding of poverty, an outline of the specific help and resources (manpower, financial and expertise) for the community to uplift itself and overcome these circumstances should be made. There should be a complete removal of stigma surrounding poverty, and an emphasis on positive language usage and framing of individuals who are either mentally or structurally trapped in poverty cycle. Campaigns should

be created with actual and nuanced representation of the community and must avoid any stereotypical branding/narrative of the Muslim community.

Reframe understanding of community advocacy and life priorities according to Islamic worldview - creating a syllabus and conducting awareness campaigns and workshops/trainings can lead to the following:

- The Islamic belief system shapes intention. The correct perspective and intention will lead to effective advocacy actions.
- Reframing the understanding of community advocacy as a responsibility of all Muslims rather than being a volunteer service provides intrinsic motivation to persist in community advocacy.
- Reframing the understanding of time and financial resources as *rizq* (resources) from Allah, and with *barakah* (blessings), there will always be enough for everything.
- Contextualising Islamic values to Singapore's contemporary landscape and instilling them in CAs as part of character development. These values include reliance on Allah, humility, wisdom, mercy, compassion, empathy, patience, resilience, diligence, openness to learning and resource sharing, and *musyawarah* (consultative behaviour – a meaningful implementation, not tokenistic).
- Strengthening families with Islamic values. Strengthening the core of the community creates a sustainable support system for CAs and stabilises the community.

2. Structural Change

Develop a holistic ecosystem for community advocacy and CA development

- Research (ground-sensing) – determine what issues the Muslim community (at different stages of life) is passionate about
- Create a purpose-driven advocacy environment – the Islamic belief system must be the soul of all CMOs and Muslim CAs
- Remove the stigma of incentivising advocacy work – provide competitive pay, create a progressive wage system, and create financial stability for advocates to ensure sustainable advocacy work
- Develop a dignity-based approach in advocacy work, especially in community organisations – develop a culture of “accountability to the powerless” rather than “accountability to the powerful”. Review the bureaucratic process – provide allowance for case-by-case off-the-record advocacy work for sensitive communities.
- Scout and create cells of CAs with incremental levels of responsibilities to create progressive training and development opportunities – create a life cycle of advocacy opportunities for people at various ages and stages of life, catered to their unique capacities, needs, and interests.
- Engage them from young (it may be too late to attract and sustain youths in advocacy work after their diploma studies), touch their hearts, and provide mentorship programmes – create succession planning and knowledge management systems. Select youth leaders and train them – ensure they have adequate spiritual, psychological, physical, intellectual, emotional, and financial capacity.
- Develop and conduct masterclass programmes to train CAs and improve their skill sets – this should include Islamic worldview and

value inculcations; survey skills; volunteer engagement; training and management; knowledge of stakeholders and Singapore's civic space (tolerance levels, risks, legalities); analysis of policies and their philosophical underpinnings; branding; campaigning; fundraising; financial management; research skills; case study analysis of success stories and models of effective advocacy work. Experts should be hired to conduct sessions and share their knowledge.

- Develop a Muslim advocacy economic network to create financial independence. It is pertinent to develop the community's flow of money (endowments).
- Define call for actions – CMOs or community advocacy leaders should list out key issues faced by the community and formulate specific call-to-actions for the public.

Establish a body dedicated to encouraging and coordinating collaborations between Muslim CAs and CMOs

- Create a database/online repository of all Muslim CAs, CMOs, and non-Muslim community organisations – it should include information of causes and resources (financial, manpower, and expertise).
- Create visibility for Muslim CAs – raise the profiles of Muslim CAs and CMOs. Highlight profiles of non-Malay Muslim CAs and CMOs specifically, group like-minded CAs/CMOs and present them as a collective front, celebrate their successes, and encourage collaborations. Visibility should also be targeted to inspire and provide role models for Muslim youths.
- Direct people with specific expertise towards causes they can champion – place the right people at the

right place to create effective use of resources.

- Facilitate dialogues and discussions for CAs and CMOs to strategise, share common steps and avoid unnecessary duplications. Provide networking opportunities for established CMOs to partner with ground-up initiatives to co-learn and share resources.
- Facilitate safe and in-depth dialogues and discussions between established CMOs/Muslim CAs and members of the public to highlight and tackle gaps and problems in advocacy work without worrying about being gaslighted or facing reprisals.
- Create programmes for Muslim CAs to work in non-Muslim organisations to learn from their expertise, champion and create awareness of the Muslim community, and tap their resources for the community's needs. Invite non-Muslim CAs to brainstorming sessions to encourage co-learning and prevent block thinking/echo chambers.

Enhance the civic space by nurturing a healthy contestation of ideas:

- The Government should encourage and incentivise advocacy work – provide financial grants and resources to all advocacy groups, even those that advocate contesting ideas.
- Enhance communication between the government and CAs regarding ground reality so that adequate resources are provided – increase transparency with regard to causes or needs that are beyond the capacity of CMOs, which should be undertaken at the national level. Invite political leaders (especially Muslim political leaders) to ground-up initiatives and informal in-depth discussions to understand ground reality.
- CAs should analyse the underlying assumptions of national policies and

question whether the assumptions are true or are based on false presumptions.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 2:

Muslim women today carry the burden of multiple socio-cultural expectations: being expected to work while juggling responsibilities at home. There is also some negative perception towards women who choose to be homemakers. These expectations hinder their effective participation in community advocacy.

Three core impediments affecting Muslim women's agency in advocacy work were derived: structural barriers, patriarchal mindset, and misconception of religiosity.

1. Structural Barriers

Inadequate infrastructure facilitating women's active presence in the community advocacy space – participants surfaced the problem of CMOs and non-Muslim Organisations not catering to the unique needs of women, thereby excluding women from these spaces.

Inadequate engagement with women who are homemakers.

Inadequate capacity – participants also emphasised the importance of internal capacity. Muslim women cannot participate in advocacy work if their capacity is already fully utilised, i.e., they are already mentally and/or physically drained. There is inadequate education for women to optimise personal resources (mental and physical energy) and insufficient support to optimise the management of said resources.

2. Patriarchal Mindset

Insufficient understanding and appreciation of the differences between men and women in thought processes, biologically, etc., and the importance of embracing these differences in nation building. This leads to inadequate facilitation and optimisation of the differences, and the exclusion of women from community spaces.

Absence of meaningful understanding and appreciation of "feminine" duties – participants also voiced concern over the continued existence of condescension towards household and caretaking responsibilities, and women's general position in society. This condescension creates ignorance of the importance of "feminine duties" in nation building. The persisting mindset leads to lack of recognition, appreciation, and facilitation for the work women do – both as homemakers and as career women.

Women's internalisation of gender roles, gender-appropriate careers, and the honour of being a "superwoman" (the internalised belief that women must be capable of doing everything, and tolerate intense physical, mental, and emotional pain) – this internalisation is further exacerbated by the existence of punitive consequences to gender non-conformity. This is problematic as it compromises the well-being of women and hinders their participation in community and nation building.

Imbalance in social and financial roles between husbands and wives creates a cycle of trauma – unhealthy dynamics between spouses lead to compromised mental health. Such dynamics affect children by transferring or creating new traumas. This in turn creates a new cycle of inherited internalisation of unhealthy or even abusive dynamics between spouses.

Government policies, family law, social work, and foster systems are still built upon patriarchy (unchallenged philosophical underpinnings) – there are observations that solutions proposed still largely focus on the mother's and not the father's role in the family, or on the traditional male and female roles/behaviours. This undermines the process of creating effective solutions to support families.

3. Misconception of Religiosity

Superficial/inadequate understanding of prophetic tradition surrounding treatment of women – participants resoundingly voiced concerns over the community's lack of understanding of the importance and method of treating women with kindness, and the lack of exposure to the lives and roles played by the Prophet's wives, female companions, and

prominent female figures (such as scholars) in Islamic history. The superficial understanding of Islam led to misconstrued ideas of Islamic teachings, and the inability to differentiate between culture and Islam.

Framing of women's religiosity being tied to commitment to the home – participants made an observation linking the unrealistic expectation towards women to the community's mixed internalisation of the concept of a modern Muslimah (the view that women must financially contribute and have careers) and the misconception of equating women's religiosity to their fulfilment of "feminine duties".



IDEATION ANALYSIS

How can society support women's decisions in engaging in community advocacy? Can Islamic values be used to redefine/navigate cultural and societal expectations of Muslim women?

Ideas generated by participants in response to these questions can be thematised into three categories: paradigm shifts, infrastructure support, and education/trainings.

1. Paradigm shifts in views on women and "feminine duties". Awareness and appreciation campaigns on unique female strengths – the campaigns should include the importance of motherhood to society and may utilise Ibn Khaldun's theory of socialisation: the character of every individual is the product of their socialisation, and the primary socialisation of children are their mothers. Healthy socialisation results in healthy Muslims (intellectually, spiritually, psychologically, and morally), who in turn form strong family institutions. This lays the foundation for a healthy Muslim community, enabling significant participation in nation building. The

campaigns should also include the necessity of unique female strengths in other areas of nation building, and substantiate the concept with examples of women's contributions in developing societies.

Awareness and appreciation campaigns on "feminine duties" should:

- rebrand the concept of "feminine duties" – household management, raising children, and caregiving – to "invisible labour"
- detail the work involved and the psychological and physical investment required
- outline its importance to nation building
- conceptualise them as another form of community advocacy. The campaigns should also highlight the importance of sharing these responsibilities between male and female family members in Singapore's current context.

Campaigns, conversations and Friday sermons for men with an Islamic lens

– outline clear steps on how to better support, appreciate, and respect women and specify misogynistic behaviour among men. Include the necessity of a collective effort between men and women in creating a healthier space for women in the advocacy space and in society at large.

Engage men in places of influence to advocate and model paradigm shifts

to acknowledge and address the male ego issue, and make deliberate efforts to be open-minded, supportive, and accommodating to women's agency in work and life choices despite personal discomforts, especially in advocacy

spaces, where such accommodations would lead to greater benefits to the community.

Organise education campaigns on how to create change – simple and concise steps on how men and women can facilitate women in exercising their agency and accessing community advocacy.

2. Infrastructure to support access and sustainability in advocacy work

Create policies (at the national and CMO levels) and infrastructure accommodating the different needs of women – different health needs; motherhood (especially during pregnancy and breastfeeding) – and facilitating men to become equal partners in household and caregiving duties, such as providing flexible and task-oriented working environments, equal paternity and maternity annual leave, childcare services, resting areas, etc.

Define alternative sources of income for homemakers beyond home-based businesses (HBB) and multi-level marketing (MLM) businesses and create policies to provide women with safety nets to re-access the job market if they want to, for example, by partnering with firms to match women to jobs. This can help financially strengthen families whose circumstances do not allow working outside of home; increase accessibility to spaces outside of home, and create a healthier, more balanced environment for homemakers to manage their capacities and well-being.

Increase accessibility of resources (including information) to women – greater awareness of available programmes/initiatives, especially women-led initiatives.

Human libraries for role modelling create visibility of different choices made by women and the type of advocacy work they do. Move away from gimmicky storytelling but present honest and raw struggles, so that women may learn from these stories. Create mentorship programmes for young women.

Programmes engaging homemakers – these events should be developed in accordance with homemakers' needs and interests, and accommodate children or include child-minding services, etc. They should also include both physical and virtual programmes as well as those that educate husbands and boys (from young) on a more balanced sharing of household/caregiving responsibilities.

3. Education and trainings to supplement paradigm shifts in views on women and "feminine duties"

Programmes training couples to outline, communicate, and negotiate roles and responsibilities in marriage

- Household responsibilities of husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters
- The importance of finding balance and its impact on psychological health and the importance of maintaining psychological health
- Knowledge of the differences between male and female perspectives/needs, and the male and female egos
- Promoting a focus on the framework of collaborative partnership between husbands and wives

In-depth Islamic education

- Islamic teachings on differences between men and women to appreciate the beauty and

importance of such differences. Define and clarify the meaning and what constitutes acts of *taqwa* (God-consciousness) for men and women, specify acts of respect and kindness towards women and their weightage in a Muslim's relationship to Allah.

- Provide, exemplify, and propagate contextualised, nuanced, and in-depth prophetic examples (using *seerah* – life of the Prophet – not just *hadiths* – prophetic narrations) of the marital dynamics between the Prophet and his companions' households, and the different roles the Prophet's wives and female companions play at the time.
- Islamic scholars to deconstruct misogynistic/patriarchal interpretation of *qawwam* (guardianship) and the internalisation of unhealthy and abusive power dynamics.

Workshops for women with an Islamic lens – psychological well-being, time management, resource (mental, spiritual, physical) management, accessing opportunities and balancing different responsibilities.

Intergenerational re-education on changing dynamics of men and women

- Facilitated intergenerational conversations about current realities – demonstrate how the patriarchal family framework is no longer sustainable/realistic. May use the worldview framework to realign the views of the older and younger generations. Establish and acknowledge the difference in perspective and use language that both generations can understand.

- Create co-learning opportunities with different ethnic and religious groups in navigating modern reality, and creating balanced and healthy spousal/familial relationships as well as in the workplace/community advocacy space.

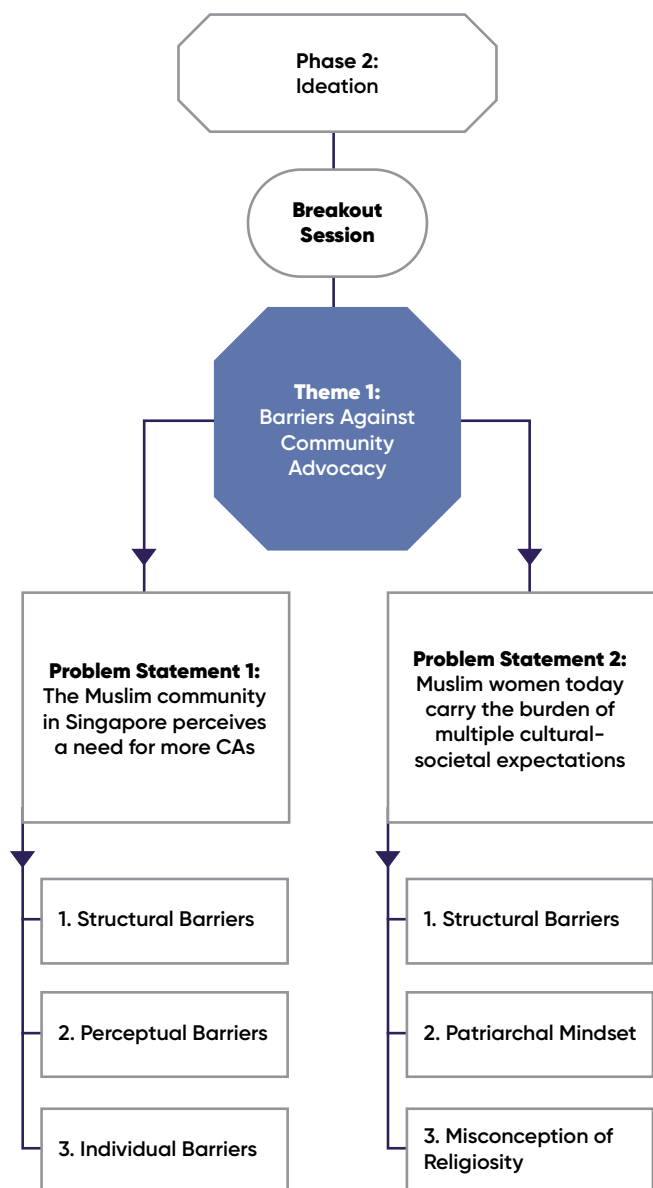


Fig. 7: Overview of ideation for Theme 1 of Community Advocates Panel paper

Community Advocacy on Social Media

PROBLEM STATEMENT 1:

Social media provides an environment that breeds narcissism – an inflated sense of self-importance and entitlement – potentially affecting how advocacy is carried out. As a result, individuals may be more interested in social media likes and shares rather than actual advocacy work.

The design of social media platforms was defined as the key factor in creating an environment that breeds narcissism and compromises the effectiveness of online advocacy.

Social media platforms were designed for the creation and growth of social networks between like-minded individuals, i.e., echo chambers, and creating profit through user engagements. User engagement measures such as likes and shares lead to personal gratifications – these promote narcissistic behaviour such as over-inflation of self and over-sharing. This is problematic for the following reasons:

1. Advocacy work requires 1) connection between people of diverse backgrounds and different opinions and perspectives; 2) investment and commitment of resources (time, intellectual capital, financial capital, activation networks) in order to 3) produce in-depth and nuanced analyses and explanations of problems, including issues of intersectionality, then 4) create and enact effective short-term and long-term solutions.

2. User engagements are important in gaining and retaining online credibility, but they become problematic when they lead to narcissistic tendencies or if online community advocates (CAs) only focus on gaining numbers/popularity and not on the responsibility or advocating power that the numbers would bring.

3. The effectiveness of online advocacy work (objectives and action) is compromised when affected by narcissistic tendencies, for example, the propagation of superficial, egoistic, and simplistic content. Such propagations, when made by online CAs with high influencing

capacity, foster divisiveness and spread negative values in the community.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

How do we encourage effective advocacy on social media despite this challenge? How do we build on the strengths of CAs using social media in Singapore? Which Islamic values can be encouraged to overcome these issues, and how?

1. Masterclasses and capacity building training by experts for online CAs

Islamic etiquette lessons and campaigns

- Educate influencers on the **importance of intention** – wanting to be liked is not blameworthy if it is for the right intention. Hence lessons and campaigns should educate online CAs on the necessity of reframing and purifying their intention of wanting to be liked. The lessons should also teach online CAs simple and quick methods/habits of purifying intention, being self-reflective, and exercising mindfulness.
- Educate on optimising a Muslim's most powerful tool – **du'a (supplication) and barakah (blessings)**. CAs can consciously apply these tools to ensure protection of their hearts from negative values, and create psychological and spiritual resilience against setbacks, challenges, and lack of visible progress.
- Inculcate the value of **fact-checking (being just)** – create a meaningful understanding of the consequences of spreading false or misleading information to effectively inculcate the habit of verifying information.

- Inculcate Islamic values that challenge/suppress narcissism, such as social justice, respect, openness, conscientiousness, accountability, humility, conscious deliberation, self-empowerment, and being action-oriented.
- Educate on the etiquettes of communication and *ikhtilaf* (differences of opinion) – teach effective communication, methods and importance of being disciplined in reading/listening to alternative perspectives, and how to respond emotively but rationally, instead of emotionally reacting.

Strategy lessons – guide online CAs on how to be objective-focused and maintain traction – sessions should outline clear, definite, and achievable objectives that are solution-focused; and methodology of advanced planning and translating/linking short-term objectives to long-term objectives. This is to ensure online advocacy work does not end at superficial creation of awareness.

Operational lessons – create in-depth understanding of the operations of social media platforms and methods to optimise each function. This would aid in creating online traction and maintaining momentum (for example how to trend # on X).

Content creating lessons – teach methods of creating visually attractive, concise, entertaining/interesting but nuanced, educational, and factual posts. Provide research training to guide online CAs on methods of fact-checking and developing nuanced understanding. Provide examples of best practices such as utilisation of humour and satire and methods to spark conversations and challenge stereotypes without triggering dissonance.

Fund raising lessons – provide information on available grants/credits provided by each platform and application method, and methods on creating endowments (example: monetise platforms).

Branding and online presence lessons – guide online CAs in creating personal branding, and strategies to gain high following and user engagements.

Methods to diversify audience and stakeholders – this is to overcome echo chambers/block thinking.

Offline competency trainings – train online CAs in public speaking, running workshops, measuring outcomes, etc.

Create a **mentoring system** for online advocates.

2. Collaborations – enhancing the Islamic concept of *jamaa’ah* (working in unison/solidarity)

Online and offline perceptual change campaigns to encourage collaborative attitude and healthy competitions, and to reduce suspicious mentalities and posturing.

Optimise a flat hierarchy in social media for aid campaigns – social media increases accessibility and speed to aid, especially flash aid campaigns for emergencies. Influencers or advocacy platforms may act as a direct link between recipients and donors, minimising processes and red tape.

Create databases that match/link organisations and/or advocates to each other – use social media as leverage to enhance offline work, as it is ineffective to completely transfer advocacy work online.

Develop relevant programmes – facilitate and moderate dialogue

sessions; create awareness campaigns using offline advertising and traditional media; develop small-scale and large-scale programmes/activities targeted at solving issues; target policies; and engage stakeholders who can influence change.

Tap on psychology of influence – social media influencers are owners of attention. They have influencing power over their followers, thus it is important to tap their capacity to create positive and effective social change. Use their influence over public attention to direct and maintain the flow of online conversations. Influencing capacity is also optimal for effective perceptual change campaigns.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 2:

The design of social media may cause individuals to remain in their own circles, engaging mostly like-minded individuals. This may hinder constructive discussions on complex issues that cross diverse interest groups.

Three areas were outlined as factors hindering constructive discussions and effective community advocacy: the design of social media platforms, the lack of an evidence-based approach and neutrality, and psychological barriers.

1. Design of Social Media Platforms

Platforms are not necessarily reflective of community sentiments – the design of social media amplifies loud voices in the community, which may be a minority view, causing a skewed sensing of actual majority sentiments. Furthermore, due to the importance placed on user engagements, influencers and social media users become fixated on outreach and tend to stray away from their initial advocacy objectives. The design also encourages ego-centric sharing, giving advocates and general users alike a sense of self-importance. This system creates the

illusion that being the loudest equates to being the most important or the most powerful.

The user interface is designed for visually intuitive, brief, and rapid engagement, as it was designed for leisure activity. This consequently leads to reactionary and superficial consumption of contents.

Cascades of news and issues advocated simultaneously lead to viral content being superficially discussed and having a short lifespan (not sustainable). This leads to superficial and unimpactful advocacy.

The design exacerbates the spread of negative news – humans are psychologically designed to be more attuned to negative news, amplifying negativity despite the presence of overwhelming positivity. Long-term exposure to high negative content on social media has psychological consequences that can be irreversible or permanent. Psychological consequences include mental fatigue, sense of powerlessness, and shortened attention span. This consequently creates more barriers to challenging difficult problems and maintaining advocacy momentum on social media.

Owners of social media platforms (largely from among the liberal west) have control over the selection, flow and accessibility of data – censorship from these powerful minorities skews online sentiments and advocacy, which has offline influence especially on youths. This becomes a serious barrier against local advocacy work that propagate alternate/different ideals.

2. Lack of Evidence-Based Approach and Neutrality

Social media users untrained in Islamic sciences tend to blindly extrapolate from Islamic sources, i.e., without exercising the proper (or any) methodology. This can result in the spread of Islamic misconceptions.

Tendency to voice opinions without verification and in-depth understanding – this leads to the spread of fake news/misinformation; it fans the flames within echo chambers, and creates greater polarity in opinions and camps.

Gaslighting and trolling phenomena – such tactics of invalidating proper well-thought arguments make it difficult to overcome echo chambers.

Clickbait headlines, biased framing of content, and incendiary tone, adopted to attract high engagements and to feed echo chambers, propagate heated, superficial and skewed opinions rather than balanced and well-researched perspectives.

Congregation around “safe” and “trendy” (hot button) issues may have validity but this type of culture results in the disregard of pertinent but difficult or unpopular issues. Some online CAs champion these issues sincerely but others may do so to appear anti-establishment or gain online traction (fame/popularity).

3. Psychological Barriers

Confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance – the human mind has a cognitive preference for interactions within spaces that affirm their biases and perspectives, while challenges to ideals and perspectives create cognitive dissonance. Such spaces create psychological discomfort resulting in reflexive defensive posturing against challengers of ideals. Such psychological barriers lead to a prevalence of block thinking, echo chambers, divisiveness, “othering” (valuing only one’s own values while denigrating and marginalising all others), and lack of empathy and openness to listen and consider opposing views and perspectives.

Frustration from lack of ability to articulate – When individuals have strong emotional attachment to an issue but lack the language or intellectual/cognitive clarity to express them, they resort to aggressive and abrasive language due to frustration.

Intuitive and reactive engagement with content on social media also leads to unquestioning acceptance of information, preventing conception of differing opinions and perspectives. This is especially in cases where during the onset of virality, only a single perspective prevails.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

How can we overcome echo chambers to reconcile the community to complex and potentially divisive issues? Which Islamic values can be encouraged to overcome these issues, and how?

1. Offline sessions between oppositional online CAs

In-person dialogues and networking sessions – facilitate and moderate small group, closed-door conversations in neutral spaces between opposing advocacy groups, with clearly defined and enforced house rules. Offline sessions humanise individuals and encourage respectful and non-confrontational behaviour. The objective of such sessions is to create opportunities to define and understand contrasting worldviews, widen perspectives, overcome “othering”, and determine points of intersection and reconciliation.

2. Exercise deliberation and conscientiousness

Practise goal-oriented communication – exercise deliberation, apply intelligence and wisdom, and ensure communication is productive and strategic as online platforms require concision, endorse impunity, and lacks body language.

3. Create a culture of *adabul ikhtilaf*:

Define, practise, and campaign for:

- A culture of unity in diversity – create extensive awareness of the guidelines of diversity in Islam. Outline issues that are fundamental and not debatable, and issues that are open to debate and differences of opinions. Creating a holistic understanding of Islam requires education beyond rituals.

- *Iqra'* (reading) culture, i.e., the culture of inquisitiveness and fact-checking.
- Culture of being nimble-minded.
- Culture of openness, respect, empathy, and seeking truth – encourage conscious efforts to understand and think positively of others – to prevent automatic rejection of opinions and perspectives due to negative biases.
- Culture of listening – create an understanding of the need to listen to be heard. If opposing sides are simultaneously shouting, it will only lead to further polarisation and will impede possibility of reconciliation.
- Culture of patience – create an understanding that individuals are at different levels of readiness. This would create a culture of giving people time, as different people are at different timelines in their relationship with Allah and at different levels of maturity (some individuals need to experience setbacks and failures before reaching an understanding).

Inculcate critical thinking in education system – create spaces for safe, respectful open debates. Inculcate the value of respectful questioning in education and humility to acknowledge the lack of knowledge. This must begin in classrooms and/or lecture halls.

Train and equip educators on how to respond to challenging questions, and the skills to navigate difficult topics/discussions.

4. Create platforms and mechanisms for safe discussions

Proactively initiate discussions on important and sensitive topics before echo chambers calcify and solidify.

Establish and enforce house rules on pages/platforms – hire a moderator to ensure respectful and healthy flow of discussion, delete comments that contain offensive language and trolling behaviour.

Present **nuanced facts** on issues to be discussed.

Develop AI system encouraging positive language/tone and fact-checking – we can create a similar algorithm to the “COVID content warnings” or “sensitive content warnings” system that warns against negative/hostile language/tone/content and provides suggestions for positive/neutral alternatives. Such mechanisms compel deliberation and conscientiousness, as contemplative pauses induce a psychological shift from reactive to responsive behaviour/thinking. Such mechanisms could balance emotional reactions through the activation of rational thinking.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 3:

There is a lack of *adab* or etiquette when conversing online. There is a need to “agree to disagree” and be “passionate without being disrespectful” to have constructive discussions.

Participants had outlined three main sources contributing to the lack of online communication etiquette: the design of social media platforms, the education system, and psychological barriers.

1. Design of Social Media Platforms

The absence of tone, body language and human touch from online communication creates a tendency for misunderstandings and misinterpretations. This is exacerbated when two individuals are from vastly different cultures. The lack of “human face” dehumanises the other

party, removing natural incentives to display good communication etiquette. This creates fertile ground for rapid descent into hostile verbal disputes and reduces accessibility to productive dialogues.

Rapid simultaneous commenting makes it easy for “trolling” and for conversations to deviate from its point of origin. This makes accessing and maintaining productive dialogues even more challenging.

The design also facilitates and aggravates cancel cultures – Rapid global connection within the platform intensifies the pressure to conform to perceived/online social expectations and trends. These expectations and trends are controlled by actors who are owners of online attention, such as microcelebrities. In this landscape, non-conforming behaviours are immediately punished through verbal bullying, character assassinations, or cancel campaigns (especially for influencers). In serious cases, it can even have offline consequences.

Silent reasonable majority – Many users are turned away by the toxicity of online discussions and tend to silently watch and read content without active engagement. The absence of these individuals skews general sentiments and intensify toxicity since there is no significant intervention.

2. Education System Inculcates Groupthink

There is absence of a healthy civic culture to encourage and facilitate healthy and respectful open dialogues. On the other hand, disagreements with educators are often seen as disrespect. Singapore’s education culture cultivates blind following as the environment discourages questioning authority and the validity of information taught. Students in pre-tertiary or tertiary institutes are not nurtured to critically think, question, and debate contents conveyed in classrooms. Overly questioning educators is oftentimes viewed as being contrary and challenging authority. This results in lost opportunities to inculcate nuanced perspectives, open-mindedness, healthy and respectful communication skills, and methods of navigating and reconciling disagreements.

3. Psychological Barriers

Stereotyping and confirmation bias is the cognitive tendency to have a preconceived opinion/idea about an individual prior to engaging them. It becomes a barrier to openness during interactions and limits an individual’s capacity to consider and understand opposing perspectives.

Paranoia and self-censorship – Singapore’s history of reprisals against expression of opposing ideals/opinions has led to the community’s internalisation of fear and heightened self-censorships. This leads to an obsession with anonymity, within which exists a culture of expressing with impunity sans accountability and credibility. This circumstance creates the dichotomy of safety vs accountability and anonymity vs credibility.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

How can we foster the culture of respectful and constructive online engagements?
Which Islamic values can be encouraged to overcome these issues, and how?

1. Individual Responsibilities

In-person dialogues and networking sessions – facilitate and moderate small group, closed-door dialogue sessions and encourage participants to focus on ideas and opinions – focus on the content of speech rather than the “labels” or identity of the individual and consciously challenge preconceived notions and stereotypes.

Actively challenge groupthink – Islam has set boundaries and allowances for differences in opinion. There is great emphasis on independent and critical thought and criticism against blind following. Actively challenge fixations on own ideas and use a balanced approach in analysing issues.

Be the "centre of radiance" – make conscious effort to display good online communication etiquette, setting a good example for others to follow.

2. Setting Boundaries

Define house rules for online communication.

Create **pervasive public awareness campaigns** on house rules – create ads, collaborate with influencers and popular online pages, and trend hashtags.

Online CAs to **set boundaries and enforce house rules** on their own platforms – to create safe spaces for effective communication.

Moderate, not regulate – partner with social media platforms to create algorithms encouraging adherence to house rules but minimise the regulation of online spaces to maintain a safe environment for advocacy.

3. Syllabus, Campaigns, and Education on *adabul ikhtilaf* (etiquette of disagreement)

Educate on *adab* (etiquette) in conversations

- **Credibility and integrity** – ensure there are no falsehoods in any comments made, ensure that the source of information is credible, and verify facts before transmitting them.
- **Accountability to Allah** – be accountable to statements made, even in anonymity; be prepared to clarify if mistakes were made; and practise regular self-reflections (*muhasabah*).
- **Wisdom** – choose words carefully, especially when the tone can easily be misinterpreted.

- **Humility and openness** – set clear intentions, be open and ready to new ideas and to be proven wrong.
- **Self-awareness and general awareness** – be aware of one's own setbacks and be aware of contexts and general circumstances.
- **Patience and deliberation** – do not force others; step back when engagements are not beneficial. Pick a proper time and place for a more effective response.
- **Tawakkal and redha** – do the best you can within your means, stand your ground, leave the rest to Allah and *redha* (acceptance) with the outcome. Understand that the power to change and move hearts belongs to Allah, not humans.
- **Addeenun naseehah** (advising is part of Islam) – shift the mentality that advice is equivalent to judgement. Constructive criticism is necessary for growth, and advising and preventing others from doing wrong is an obligation in Islam.

Contextualise Islamic knowledge to current issues – e.g., Muslim.sg and Yaqeen Institute.

Engage mosques and parents for capacity building programmes.

Emphasise values of *haya'* (values for all Muslims irrespective of gender) – modesty is beyond physical covering but also in speech and behaviour. To deter bad *akhlaq/adab* (character/etiquette) and increase awareness of accountability to Allah, so anonymity from human masses is not a shield.

Campaigns are interventionists in nature – learn from methods used in Singapore Kindness Movement and other successful public campaigns.

Collaborate with influencers and famous pages – ensure that the conversation is everywhere and reaches subliminal level of the masses.

Campaigns should be conducted in tandem with a shift in education syllabus and workshop programmes.

Create follow-up measures to ensure the enforcement of online etiquettes – engage online CAs to moderate behaviour on their own platforms.

4. Positive Campaigns

Create positive campaigns to counter cancel campaigns – this is a soft alternative to the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA). Use trending systems and online marketing tools to advocate positive online behaviour. Create waves of positivity to counter onslaughts of negativity. These campaigns can be fronted/partnered with influencers to create speed and visibility.

5. Analysis

Online behaviour of impunity (bad *akhlaq/adab*) must be further examined. Is it reflective of the entire community, generation-specific, or individual-specific? If it is at the societal level, we must determine whether online and offline behaviours are reflective of each other. Depending on the result of the analysis, develop interventions specific to the scope of the problem.

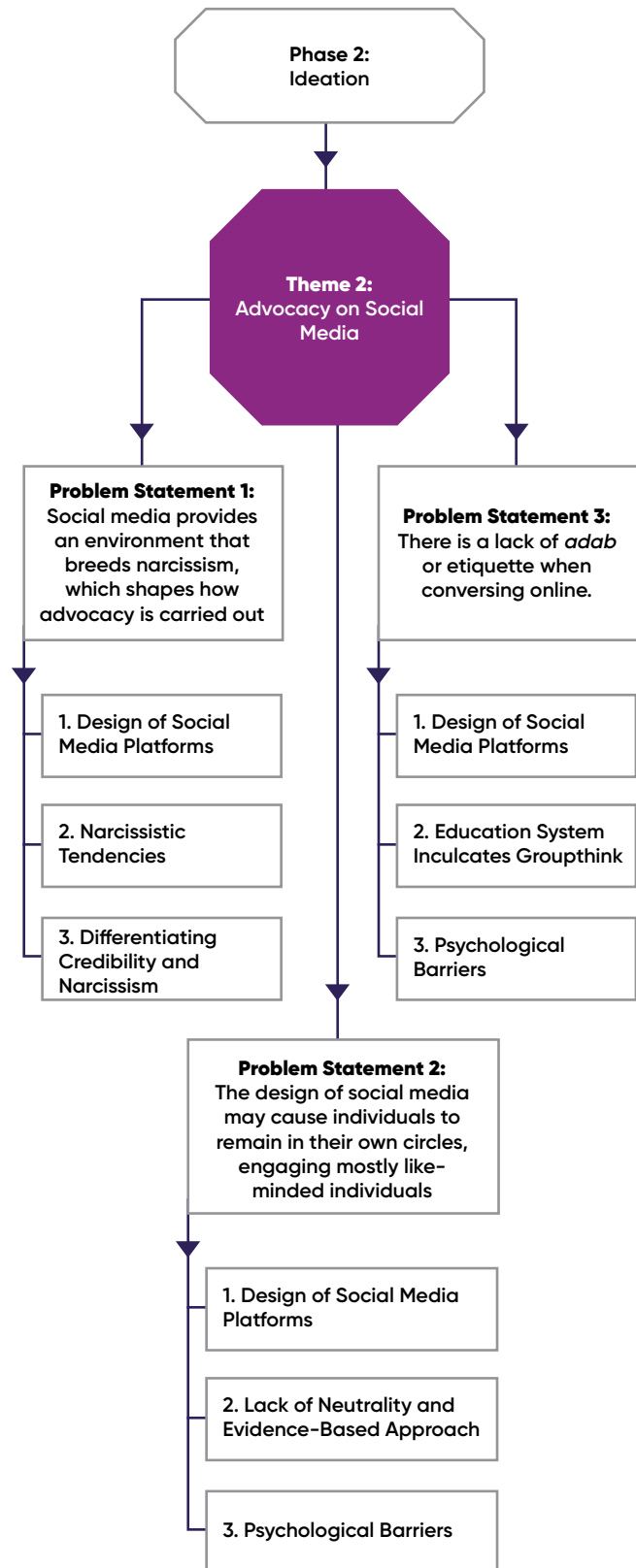


Fig. 8: Overview of ideation for Theme 2 of Community Advocates Panel paper

CONCLUSION

This work paper was initiated with the main objective of **providing support for Muslim professionals to play more significant roles in strengthening communities**, and the secondary objective of **encouraging Islamic values in promoting advocacy**. A qualitative approach had been adopted to first produce an accurate assessment of ground reality, then to ideate potential solutions to achieve the work paper's objectives.

Based on findings from the online survey and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted in the first phase, five problem statements classified under two themes were defined for the community advocacy panel.

Theme 1: Barriers Against Community Advocacy

1. The Muslim community in Singapore perceives a need for more community advocates (CAs). However, factors such as lack of time, perceptions of rigidity in Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs), as well as fear of reprisals hinder Muslim professionals from stepping forward.
2. Muslim women today carry the burden of multiple socio-cultural expectations – being expected to work while juggling responsibilities at home. There is also some negative perception towards women who choose to be homemakers. These expectations hinder their effective participation in community advocacy.

Theme 2: Community Advocacy on Social Media

3. Social media provides an environment that breeds narcissism – an inflated sense of self-importance and entitlement – potentially affecting how advocacy is carried out. As a result, individuals may be more interested in social media likes and shares rather than actual advocacy work.
4. The design of social media may cause individuals to remain in their own circles, engaging mostly like-minded individuals. This may hinder constructive discussions on complex issues that cross diverse interest groups.

5. There is a lack of *adab* (etiquette when conversing online). There is a need to “agree to disagree” and be “passionate without being disrespectful” to have constructive discussions.

During AMP's 4th National Convention, 77 participants then ideated solutions for these problem statements. The intensive and structured session resulted in potential solutions the community could adopt. Since the problems are intersectional in nature, ideations that target multiple issues should be prioritised.

For problem statement 1, “Enhance the civic space by nurturing a healthy contestation of ideas”; “Reframing community advocacy and life priorities according to the Islamic worldview”; and “Establish a body dedicated to encouraging collaborations between Muslim CAs and CMOs” were the three ideations that simultaneously target the greatest number of issues. See Appendix B for further details.

For problem statement 2, “Campaigns on “feminine duties””; “Programmes training couples to outline, communicate, and negotiate roles and responsibilities in marriage”; and “Campaigns on unique female strengths” were the three ideations with the highest number of targeted problems. Appendix C expands on this.

Subsequently, for the problem statements in theme 2, “Masterclasses and capacity building trainings by experts”; “Collaborations – enhancing the Islamic concept of *jamaa'ah*”; “Exercise deliberation and conscientiousness”; “Create a culture of *adabul ikhtilaf*”; and “Create syllabus, campaigns and education on *adabul ikhtilaf* or etiquette of disagreements” were ideations that focus on the greatest number of problems simultaneously. Further details on this analysis can be found under Appendix D, Appendix E, and Appendix F.

These ideations, despite being detailed, still require further development. This work paper encourages CMOs and Muslim CAs to consider undertaking them to advance the needs of Muslim CAs in Singapore.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Community Advocates Panel Problem Definition Phase – Discussion of Findings

One of the main issues that the country faces is self-censorship and, even in 2022, it is still a problem. From the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), respondents – some of whom are extremely active socially – discussed the fear of reprisal as a significant factor that deters a lot of advocacy work. Scholars have also discussed how activists, journalists and even ordinary citizens often censor themselves³. We find that this remains an issue. The apprehension stems from perceptions that individuals seen as challenging the State or perceived to be controversial are reprimanded by government leaders.

Some respondents have also mentioned the internalisation of stereotypes as a problem that deters advocacy. The myth of the lazy Malay is unfortunately still prevalent, as is the meritocratic myth that says “If you work hard, you will succeed; and if you do not succeed, that means you did not work hard”. Beliefs like these deter people from advocating for the less privileged, since individual – not structural – factors would be cited for their problems.

Furthermore, there is a lack of solidarity among advocates. Respondents observed that advocates and Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) without access to the government are overly cynical compared to those that do have such access, and vice versa. They also observed a lack of resources channelled to collaborative work, including in CMOs.

For Muslim women, in addition to the challenges to advocacy in general, they have the added burden of socio-cultural expectations: being working women while juggling other identities. These hurdles exist and are not advocacy-specific, but a note on the importance of having male allies is still due, as mentioned by the respondents. At the same time, some respondents pointed out that there is some disdain towards women who choose to be homemakers, and that this type of condescension is not in line with true equality.

In the case of social media, the study found it to be a key arena, perhaps *the* key arena, for advocacy. Whatever the consequences, social media has become pervasive; hence it is a reality that has to be dealt with. This reality comes with a lot of good: the barriers to entry for advocacy are much lower; individuals are able to overcome obstacles that previously inhibited the airing of opinions such as mainstream media, limiting them to only articulating their thoughts publicly through organisations or self-censorship. Notable movements have started because of social media, and a lot of good work has been enabled by it.

At the same time, social media can be a transformative force that is not always for the better. A culture of narcissism has been enabled by social media, and it has also affected how advocacy is carried out. It may be that advocates have become more interested in social media likes and shares rather than getting things done. Worse still, the nature of social media may lead to polarisation, as advocates may be in their respective silos and echo chambers and not want to find solutions for difficult issues that cut across different interest groups, hence requiring significant compromise. This polarisation is aggravated by the lack of “*adab*” or etiquette exercised online.

Social media has contributed to a more narcissistic, and perhaps less selfless, culture where people are always eager to inflate themselves under the guise of self-affirmation. As emphasised earlier, baseline Islamic values can contribute to the alleviation of the problems faced by humanity. The findings reflect this belief. Among the inclusivist Islamic values outlined is the execution of justice, integrity, accountability, wisdom, patience, empathy, and being selfless for the sake of Allah. A specific Islamic teaching that was highlighted is to deflate one’s own ego to the point that one becomes in service of others; one is always encouraged to de-emphasise (not devalue) one’s self.

These findings justify the sub-objective of the study, which is to encourage the fostering of Islamic values in promoting advocacy work.

³ See: George, Cherian. *Freedom from the Press: Journalism and State Power in Singapore*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2012. See also: Abdullah, Walid Jumblatt. *Islam in a Secular State: Muslim Activism in Singapore*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021.

Appendix B:

	Institutional barriers	CMOs rigidity	Infrastructure of Advocacy Space	Absence of Islamic Wordview	Stigma of Incentivising Community Advocacy work
Rebranding CMOs from "self-help" to "community touch point"		✓			
Create awareness/ campaigns on the nuances & intersectionality of the problems faced by the Muslim community in Singapore		✓			
Reframe understanding of CA work & life priorities according to Islamic worldview				✓	
Develop a holistic ecosystem for community advocacy and CA development			✓		✓
Establish a body dedicated to encouraging collaborative behaviour & coordinating collaborations between Muslim CA and CMOs			✓		
Enhance the civic space by nurturing a healthy contestation of ideas	✓		✓		✓

Fig. 9: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 1 of Theme 1: Barriers Against Community Advocacy

Appendix B:

	Concept of Time, Credibility & Accountability	Mental Barriers	Absence of Islamic Worldview	Lack of Advocacy Skillset	Absence of Openness	Inadequate Guidance in Navigating the Civic Space
Rebranding CMOs from "self-help" to "community touch point"	✓	✓				
Create awareness/campaigns on the nuances & intersectionality of the problems faced by the Muslim community in Singapore		✓				
Reframe understanding of CA work & life priorities according to Islamic worldview	✓	✓	✓			
Develop a holistic ecosystem for community advocacy and CA development				✓		
Establish a body dedicated to encouraging collaborative behaviour & coordinating collaborations between Muslim CA and CMOs				✓	✓	✓
Enhance the civic space by nurturing a healthy contestation of ideas					✓	✓

Fig. 9: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 1 of Theme 1: Barriers Against Community Advocacy

Appendix C:

	Inadequate infrastructure facilitating women's active presence in Community Advocacy space	Inadequate engagement with women who are homemakers	Inadequate personal capacity	Government policies, family law, social work, foster systems are still built upon patriarchal lenses	Insufficient understanding and appreciation of the differences between men and women
Campaigns on the unique female strengths				✓	✓
Campaigns on "feminine duties"		✓		✓	✓
Campaigns, conversations and Friday sermons for men with Islamic lens					✓
Engage men in places of influence to advocate and role-model paradigm shift					✓
Education campaign on how to create change	✓				
Create policies (national and CMO level) and infrastructure			✓	✓	
Define alternative sources of income for homemakers and policies for safety net		✓			
Increase accessibility of resources (including information) to women	✓		✓		
Human libraries for role-making	✓			✓	
Programmes engaging homemakers		✓			
Programmes training couples to outline, communicate and negotiate roles and responsibilities in marriage	✓		✓	✓	✓
Workshops for women with Islamic lens		✓	✓	✓	
Intergenerational re-education on changing dynamics of men & women	✓			✓	

Fig. 10: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 2 of Theme 1: Barriers Against Community Advocacy

Appendix C:

	Absence of meaningful understanding and appreciation of "feminine" duties	Women's internalisation of gender roles, gender appropriate careers, and the honour of being a "superwoman"	Imbalance in social and financial roles between husbands and wives creates a cycle of trauma	Superficial/ inadequate understanding of prophetic tradition	Framing of women's religiosity being tied to compliment to the home
Campaigns on the unique female strengths	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Campaigns on "feminine duties"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Campaigns, conversations and Friday sermons for men with Islamic lens	✓				
Engage men in places of influence to advocate and role-model paradigm shift	✓				
Education campaign on how to create change					
Create policies (national and CMO level) and infrastructure					
Define alternative sources of income for homemakers and policies for safety net		✓	✓		✓
Increase accessibility of resources (including information) to women				✓	
Human libraries for role-making		✓		✓	
Programmes engaging homemakers	✓				
Programmes training couples to outline, communicate and negotiate roles and responsibilities in marriage	✓	✓	✓		✓
Workshops for women with Islamic lens	✓			✓	✓
Intergenerational re-education on changing dynamics of men & women			✓	✓	✓

Fig. 10: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 2 of Theme 1: Barriers Against Community Advocacy

Appendix D:

	Platforms were designed for the creation & growth of social network between like-minded individuals	Narcissistic tendencies (overinflation of self & oversharing) exacerbated by profit design	Differentiating credibility and narcissism
Masterclass & capacity building trainings by experts	✓	✓	✓
Collaborations – enhancing Islamic concept of <i>jamaa'ah</i>	✓	✓	✓

Fig. 11: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 1 of Theme 2: Community Advocacy on Social Media

Appendix E:

	Platforms are not necessarily reflective of community sentiments	User interface designed for visually intuitive, brief, and rapid engagement	Cascade of news & issues simultaneously advocated	The design exacerbates the spread of negative news	Owners of social media platform	
Offline sessions between oppositional online CAs	✓					
Exercise deliberation & conscientiousness		✓	✓	✓		
Create culture of <i>adabul ikhtilaf</i>						
Online platform & mechanisms for safe discussions					✓	

Fig. 12: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 2 of Theme 2: Community Advocacy on Social Media

	Social media users untrained in Islamic sciences tend to blindly extrapolate from Islamic sources	Tendency to voice opinions without verification & in-depth understanding	Gaslighting and trolling phenomenon	Clickbait headlines, biased framing of content, and incendiary tone	Congregation around "safe" and "trendy" (hot button) issues	Confirmation bias & cognitive dissonance	Frustration from inability to express	Intuitive and reactive engagement with content
					✓		✓	
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
	✓		✓	✓			✓	
					✓	✓		

FAMILY

INTRODUCTION

The Family Panel, first convened in January 2022, consists of six panel members:

1. **Fathurrahman Dawoed**, Panel leader, Vice-Chairman of AMP Singapore, and Executive Director, Andalus Corporation Pte Ltd
2. **Md Noordin Yusuff**, member of AMP Singapore Board of Directors, and Head of Security and IT Operations at Doctor Anywhere
3. **Hafiz Othman**, Executive Director, Emaan Catalyst Community Ltd
4. **Khairul Ruzaini**, Owner, SmartMamat.com and Lead, Marketing & Partnerships, ShopBack
5. **Nadia Hanim Abd Rahman**, Director, Al-Wafa' and Co-Founder, Our Little Ummah Learning Centre
6. **Siti Nurzakiah Zar'an**, Senior Medical Social Worker, KK Women's & Children's Hospital

The panel members conducted extensive discussions to identify issues within the context of Muslim families in Singapore. Following the discussions, the Panel highlighted the following as this study's main objective: **Strengthening the Family Institution through Islamic Values**. The secondary objectives are to study and reflect on:

- a) **the impact of digital devices on family values and relationships**
- b) **the importance of healthy communication on sexuality education between family members**

From the objectives mentioned above, we can see that the Panel adopted a problem-based

approach that revolves around the pressing issues of Technology and Sexuality Education, and how they impact families and children.

The family unit has been the constitutive point of reference to measure the success of every given society. This is primarily because this institution plays a vital role in enriching our lives, and it serves as our anchor in a fast-paced and ever-changing world. With its multifaceted functions, it serves as a critical pillar in the healthy maintenance of social life and the construction of moral values. At the individual level, families are an important source of emotional, social, and financial support. At a collective level, the family unit contributes to social order and cohesiveness as it helps develop socially responsible individuals, inevitably deepening the connection they have with the country. However, social critics have described our modern epoch as an age of disconnections, which is disruptive to collectivist norms that have traditionally shaped the family unit¹. It is characterised by the radical free will and individualism in which the familial space is no longer seen as a sanctuary but as becoming something of a prison.

Today, the growing ubiquity of technology means that the family unit has significantly been transformed by handheld devices and other everyday digital technologies. Technology has become an inescapable tool as more people are finding it difficult to live without it, seeing that we largely depend on it for communication, entertainment, and even earning a living. However, while technology has the powerful ability to

¹Mahroof, Kamran, et al. "Technology as a Disruptive Agent: Intergenerational Perspectives." *Information Systems Frontiers*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2018, pp. 749-770. doi:10.1007/s10796-018-9882-3.

connect people around the world with a single touch, it has paradoxically hindered family connections by reducing socialisation and driving a wedge between children and parents. This is because children view the decreasing interaction as a form of independence and freedom from parents' intrusion in their social lives. In other words, technology and digital devices ultimately complicate the ways families interact today as qualities of communication degrade, and people neglect personal involvement in the presence of others. This has deleterious effects on key family values such as love, care, mutual respect, and responsibility.

Moreover, technological developments have induced certain social disruptions that are reshaping the way we define the concept of family and the way we conceive traditional family life and norms. The digital age brings about new discussions such as technological disruptions and the ubiquity of sexuality that alter familial values and relationships. For instance, the idea of the heterosexual monogamous unit being the only way to produce and protect a child has been challenged. For example, we have seen an increase of portrayals in entertainment content and social media platforms that veer away from the heterosexual and monogamous way of bearing and raising children. The advent of technological progress means that women can bear and raise children on their own, while homosexual men are able to have biological children² through new means. At the same time, information technology opens many different platforms and opportunities for individuals to educate themselves on sexuality and adopt alternative lifestyles that stand in contrast with traditional family structures. To further compound matters, youths resort to these platforms to educate themselves on sexuality instead of communicating with parents. However, youths are not exclusively to be blamed as parents are also not communicating effectively on sexuality education due to fears of encouraging early sexual behaviour.

In light of these observed problems and the deliberations extrapolated from our engagements, the Family Panel therefore used technology and sexuality education as sub-themes in unpacking the convention's main theme – **Strengthening the Muslim Family Institution through Islamic Values**. We have narrowed the scope of the panel to the impact of digital devices on familial values and relationships, and the importance of healthy communication on sexuality education between family members.

The reasons for using technology as a sub-theme are as follows:

- Technology has disrupted traditional forms of communication between parents and their children
- There is a growing preference for online communication in all aspects of familial relationships
- The gradual loss of face-to-face interactions has led to the erosion of social values among children
- Excessive screen time and over-reliance on digital devices could lead to addiction-withdrawal effects

Similarly, the reasons for exploring issues on sexuality as a sub-theme are as follows:

- Parents avoid talking about the topic to their children while simultaneously wanting to be more involved in their children's sexuality education
- Lack of openness in talking about the issue within the community
- Fears of blasphemy when discussing sexuality
- Religious exposure since childhood impacts perception on sexuality
- Discussions of sexuality education are still limited in scope as they tend to focus only on preventive measures

Given the problems associated with technology and sexuality, we analyse the impact of shifting

²Vijayan, K.C. "Court rejects bid by gay man to make partner guardian of his two surrogate children." 2018. *The Straits Times*, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/court-rejects-bid-by-gay-man-to-make-partner-guardian-of-his-two-surrogate-children>. Accessed 12 September 2022.

family values that fuel estrangement within the family unit. The Family Panel therefore aims to propose strategies in strengthening the Muslim family institution through a value-based framework that is conceptualised during the convention. This aligns with the recent statement made by Minister Masagos Zulkifli on Budget 2023: "To continue nurturing a community of success, we need to strengthen our Malay/Muslim families, who are the key building blocks of our community. A key area that requires attention is the changing needs of families³."

Paper Outline

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the issues at hand. The sections are organised as follows:

This section elaborates on the general context of the study.

The sections on Problem Definition and Problem Statements will cover

- i) the qualitative and quantitative methods of identifying and understanding the issues of Technology and Sexuality Education
- ii) the subsequent findings from the methods
- iii) the extraction of Problem Statements from the findings

The Ideation section will expand on

- i) the methodology of ideation during breakout sessions
- ii) thematisation of the ideations
- iii) contextualisation and analysis of the ideations

The final section will conclude this paper with a summary and suggestions for future directions.

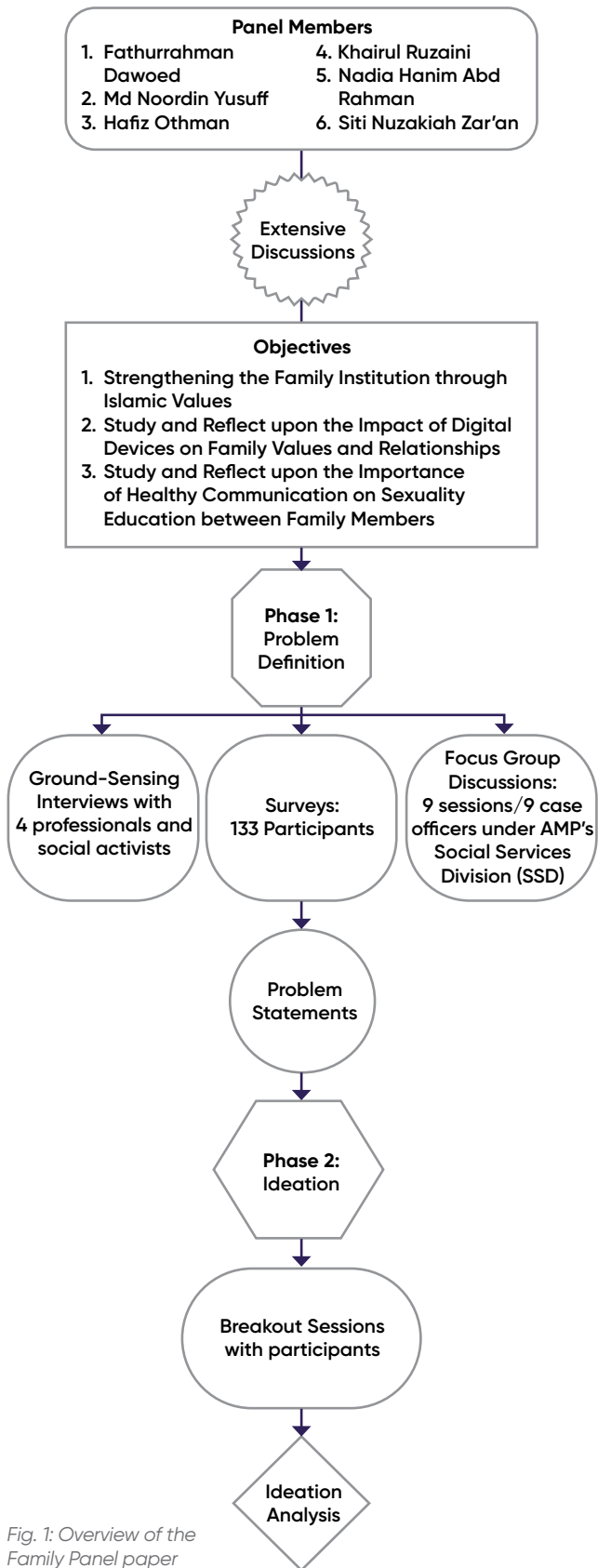


Fig. 1: Overview of the Family Panel paper

³Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY). "Strengthening our Community of Success." 2021. MCCY, <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/about-us/news-and-resources/speeches/2021/mar/strengthening-our-community-of-success>. Accessed 12 September 2022.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Methodology

We utilised a multi-method approach to achieve a holistic and contextualised understanding of the issue at hand. By adopting this approach, we are exposed to responses from professionals to members of the public. The quantitative method provided us an overview of responses on the perceived state of the Malay/Muslim community today. Additionally, the qualitative approach allowed us to understand individual experiences, gain insights into key issues, assess the quality of current services provided, and obtain guidance in drafting recommendations for future policies.

The adopted methods are as follows:

1. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
2. Ground-sensing interviews with professionals and social activists
3. Derivation of statistics and data by gathering public perception through a survey containing open and close-ended questions.

Focus Group Discussions with Practitioners

We conducted the FGDs separately based on two themes, mainly the impact of digital devices on familial values and relationships, and the importance of sexuality communication from a family perspective. We sought out nine case officers under AMP's Social Services Division (SSD) for each FGD.

The discussion on technology covers issues such as the impact of technology on parent-child relationships; the roles of stakeholders in mediating the prevalent use of digital devices among children; and the correlation between social/gender norms and technology.

On the other hand, the discussion on sexuality education covers sub-issues such as the extent of parental involvement in sexuality education; the roles of stakeholders in promoting healthy and respectful conversations around sexuality; and the correlation between social/gender norms and understanding of one's sexuality.

The interactions and discussions with AMP's SSD staff were helpful in facilitating a more nuanced perspective of the themes, as their responses were likely to be grounded in real encounters with clients of varying backgrounds and family dynamics, given their years of experience in their respective fields. While we believe that the insights gathered are necessary for highlighting key areas of concern, we acknowledge the limitations that surround the FGDs. Speaking to the officials limits our scope as they provide only case-specific responses. As such, it would be imprecise and unfair to solely work with findings from these FGDs.

Ground-Sensing Interviews

As mentioned earlier, the objectives of ground-sensing interviews are to gain insights into key issues, assess the impact of key issues on Muslim families, and obtain guidance in drafting recommendations for future changes.

A consultation on the role of parents and implications of digital exposure on familial values and relationships was organised with two officials from AMP SSD. The discussion focused on technological disruptions, technology as a bridging activity, and technological awareness.

As for sexuality, we held two ground-sensing interviews with members of Crit Talk and an officer from Pergas⁴. Both interviews dealt with sexuality being a taboo topic within Muslim families.

Discussions were held with the founders of Crit Talk as the organisation believes in making room for everyone in the community, allowing taboo topics such as egalitarian marriages, divorce, sexism, gender, and sexuality to be publicly discussed. Hence, the discussions centred on the nature of sexuality education and the availability of safe spaces for alternative views within the community.

Additionally, the Panel conducted a ground-sensing interview with an official from Pergas to explore the religious dimension to sexuality education, and its implication within the family unit. Getting insights from the religious fraternity was important for our analysis as religion is a powerful mobiliser that plays a critical role in shaping discourses in the public sphere⁵.

⁴Pergas ('Persatuan Ulama dan Guru-Guru Agama Islam Singapura' in Malay, or 'Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association' in English) is a non-governmental organisation that serves a socio-religious role in developing the *asatizah* (Islamic religious teachers) and Muslim community in Singapore. It has played a historical role in spearheading public engagements related to the Muslim community. Crit Talk is a grassroots effort to initiate and engage in critical conversations in the public space about taboo issues revolving the Muslim community.

⁵Blackbox. "Muslim Community Sentiment Study 2020." 2020.

These interviews provided us with insights from key stakeholders on existing initiatives, allowing the panel to understand their experiences, concerns and challenges, alongside possible gaps unique to the Muslim community.

Outliers from Focus Group Discussions and/or Ground-Sensing Interviews

During our engagements, we identified certain outliers beyond the scope of discussion. It is relevant to note that these outliers were discussed by the participants during the convention.

Outliers of Technology

During the interview with AMP SSD, the discussion on the impact of technology on familial values and relationships boiled down to the nature of parental involvement, tapping into social support, and adopting traditional parenting styles.

Outliers of Sexuality

On top of that, from the ground-sensing interview with Crit Talk, we identified outliers that include addressing intergenerational trauma, sexuality being an issue of conservatism instead of one that is Malay, the role of Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) in facilitating instead of preaching, long-term parenting workshop and a proper diagnosis of the issue.

These outliers are addressed during the convention.

Key Findings

The following section elucidates key findings from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and ground-sensing interviews. They have been categorised into two themes. For an analysis on the key findings, refer to Appendix A.

The impact of digital devices on familial values and relationships:

- The impact of technological disruption
- Technology as a bridging activity
- Facilitating technological awareness
- The role of parents in supervising technology usage

The role of families in sexuality education:

- Sexuality as a fear-inducing topic
- Sexuality education as firmly rooted in religious doctrine
- Sexuality as a discourse is complex and highly contested
- The role of parents in sexuality education

Perception Surveys

The perception surveys aimed to gather findings on the community's areas of concern and the potential room for improvement. Participants ranged from ages 20 and above across all income levels, educational backgrounds, and races. The 10-minute survey aimed to gather information on the public's general awareness and thoughts on the impact of technology on familial values and relationships. Views on the accessibility and quality of current efforts and programmes were similarly collated. Initially, we aimed to collect 400 survey responses through a poster that was disseminated to the public.

Format of Perception Surveys

Both surveys were formatted similarly, and asked for:

a. Basic information

- i) With the participants' basic information, we were able to compare the general trends for different age groups, the status of parenthood, races, income levels, and educational backgrounds. This is crucial in evaluating and understanding Muslim family dynamics.

b. Awareness of issues

c. Existing concerns

d. Thoughts on current advocacy work

- i) For example, questions targeted at Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) were present in both perception surveys. This is to identify the concerns and recommendations proposed by respondents that would better assist CMOs in addressing gaps within existing programmes.

e. Recommendations for programmes

- i) Participants were also asked to share on matters that should be incorporated to improve the quality of sexuality education/digital awareness programmes within the Muslim community.

Findings from Perception Survey

For the Perception Survey on both technology and sexuality education, we received a total of 133 respondents, of which 60% were parents.

The survey on technology showed that 62.2% of parents were sufficiently aware of the effects of digitalisation. Lack of time among parents to constantly supervise their children's usage of digital devices and difficulty in becoming positive role models as parents themselves rely on technology as a source of distraction were identified as important matters to be addressed.

Data gathered from the survey on sexuality showed that 89% of parents were not equipped with enough knowledge and skills to effectively communicate on the topic of sexuality with their children. Due to lack of awareness and knowledge on how to approach the topic, most parents in the survey relied on the internet to obtain information on sexuality-related matters. Religious sources and mainstream education were the next biggest sources of information. From this, we learned that parents prefer using the internet for information on sexuality education, as opposed to approaching professionals. As cited in the survey, 87% of the participants felt that discussions of sexuality were largely conservative and there was a lack of safe spaces for open discussion. This perhaps shows why participants are averse to seeking external help on such matters.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

From the findings, we have first identified that digital exposure has led to communication problems within families. The absence of a value system in defining healthy boundaries poses increased difficulty in maintaining parental responsibility and accountability when regulating children's usage of digital devices. Second, we recognised that digital ubiquity has enabled the prevalence of alternative approaches to sexuality that may challenge Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) and family institutions due to lack of resources and support on the subject matter. Finally, we acknowledged the increased awareness of the importance of effective communication on sexuality, but there are different levels of openness and fear towards approaching it that require deeper investigation.

From the analysis of key findings, we extracted the following problem statements that are to be addressed during the convention's breakout sessions. The statements are as follows:

THEME 1:
Impact of digital devices on family values and relationships

PROBLEM STATEMENT:
1
Parents are conflicted in wanting to encourage technology use for their children but fear potential implications on parent-child relationship.

Guiding Question during Ideation

In what ways can Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) better equip parents in achieving the ability to strategically balance the use and access of technology?

PROBLEM STATEMENT:
2
Parents are concerned that children are heavily reliant on digital devices as an alternative form of education and entertainment.

Guiding Questions during Ideation

How can parents mediate between online and offline modes of education for children?

How can children prevent heavy reliance on digital devices? How can parents regulate children's exposure to technology use? How can parents be readily equipped and available for children as sources of knowledge?

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

3

Parents worry about the inappropriate and unsuitable content that linger on the internet, highlighting the lack of technological awareness and ethics among children.

Guiding Question during Ideation

How can we formulate ethical frameworks that would empower our children to use technology critically and creatively?

THEME 2:

Importance of healthy communication on sexuality education between family members

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

1

There is tension between the need to talk about sexuality openly and the fear of normalising actions that contradict Islamic guidelines on sexuality.

Guiding Questions during Ideation

Is it possible for parents to engage in conversations on sexuality education with children without the "too young" mindset? How can parents approach children on this topic?

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

2

Participants highlighted the increasing deterioration of mental and physical health due to the lack of safe spaces to express their sexuality and identity concerns.

Guiding Questions during Ideation

Is it possible to promote adequate safe spaces for individuals with sexuality and identity concerns?

Are our institutions equipped with sufficient resources to create safe spaces?

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

3

Parents are not well equipped with knowledge of sexuality due to lack of opportunities for parental involvement/ lack of breadth on sexuality topics.

Guiding Question during Ideation

How can parents help children avert various forms of influences that can be insensitive to long-established norms?

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

4

Asatizah and CMOs, in general, have the capacity and resources to conceptualise a holistic framework for sexuality education based on religious values.

Guiding Questions during Ideation

What can Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) offer in developing and enhancing the capabilities of religious teachers and counsellors?

While the repeal of Section 377A drives inclusivity, how can we guarantee the outcome of nurturing our children according to long-established family norms?

Problem Statements for Technology

- i) Parents are conflicted in wanting to encourage technology use for their children but fear potential implications on the parent-child relationship.
- ii) Parents are concerned that children are heavily reliant on digital devices as an alternative form of education and entertainment.

iii) Participants worry about inappropriate and unsuitable content that linger on the internet, highlighting the lack of technological awareness and ethics among children.

Problem Statements for Sexuality Education

i) There is tension between the need to talk about sexuality openly and the fear of normalising actions that contradict Islamic guidelines on sexuality.

ii) Participants highlighted the increasing deterioration of mental and physical health due to the lack of safe spaces in which to express their sexuality and identity concerns.

iii) Parents are not well equipped with knowledge of sexuality due to lack of opportunities for parental involvement/lack of breadth on sexuality topics.

iv) *Asatizah* and Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs), in general, have the capacity and resources to conceptualise a holistic framework for sexuality education based on religious values.

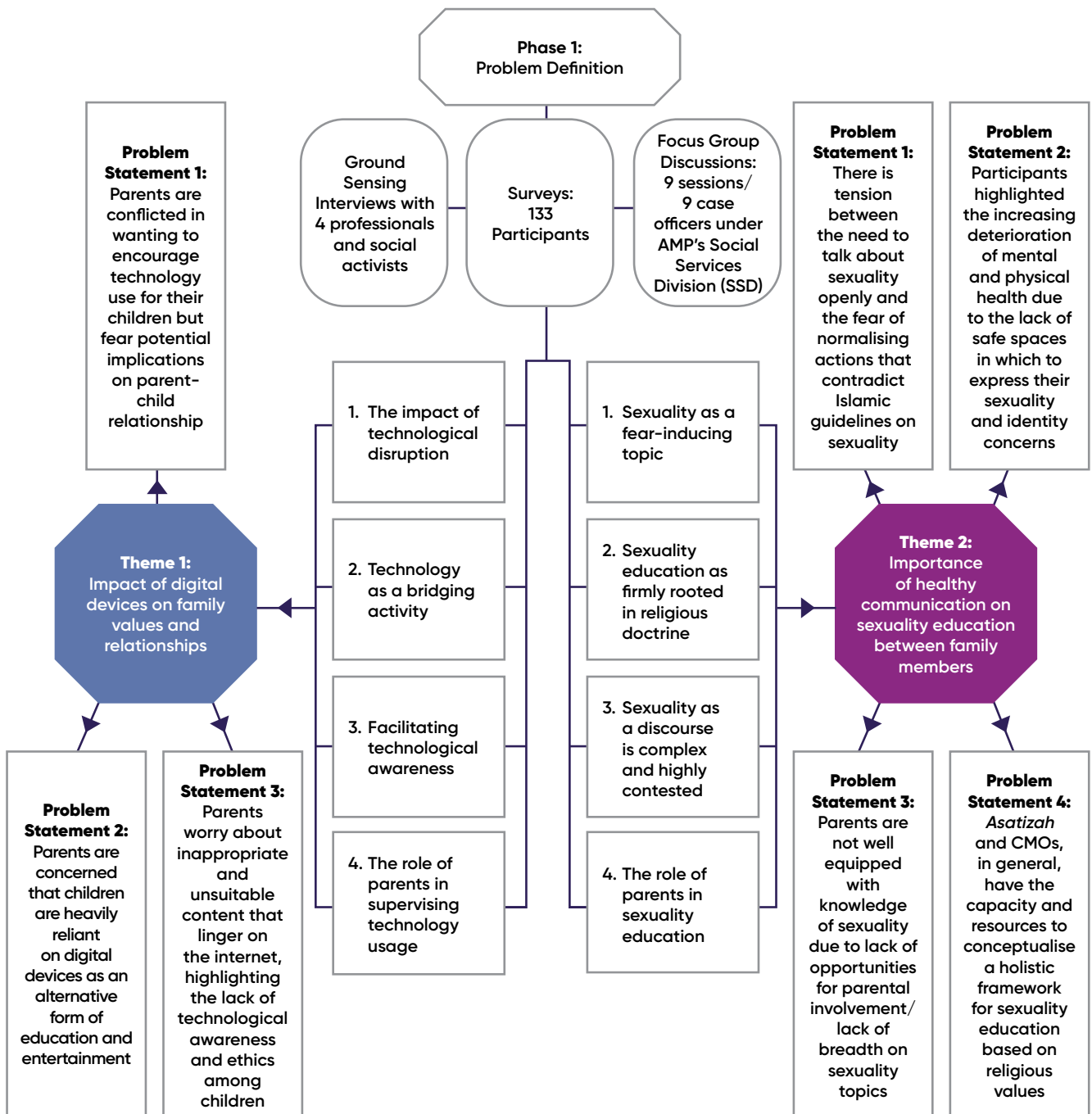


Fig. 2: Overview of ideation phase for the Family Panel paper

IDEATION

Breakout Session Methodology

A breakout session was conducted to identify potential solutions targeting the defined problem statements. Participants involved were seated in tables of seven, with a pre-assigned facilitator and a scribe. The tables were divided into two groups: Technology and Sexuality Education.

Each group ideated thematically for approximately two hours. The ideation process for each problem statement, within each theme, is as follows:

- Part A: Reflection of Problem Statement
- Part B: Ideate Using Guiding Questions
- Part C: Reflection of Undiscussed Issues

For Part A, participants were invited to reflect on the problem statement. This allowed them to contextualise problem statements according to their individual perspectives and experiences while also framing them in the context of the Muslim community. Discussants were also asked to provide input on the relatability of problem statements and were encouraged to share their own experiences – ensuring a more holistic understanding of these issues alongside a grounded ideation process.

For Part B, participants were prompted to ideate and discuss potential solutions. Facilitators led the discussions by using guiding questions based on key findings from the problem definition stage.

For Part C, participants deliberated on other related issues, such as the implementation of certain ideations and other issues that were not included in the discussions. This is to ensure comprehensiveness in the ideations.

Through the three processes, participants were able to discuss contextually and generate relevant and practical ideas that will bring progress for the community.

Impact of Digital Devices on Family Values and Relationships

PROBLEM STATEMENT 1:

Parents are conflicted in wanting to encourage technology use for their children but fear potential implications on the parent-child relationship.

1. Excessive technology usage aggravates existing relationship issues between parents and children

– Participants shared their concerns about the implications of technology on parent-child relationships. There is a belief that excessive technology usage, or digital addiction, impedes healthy relationships and communication. This could lead to three issues, mainly: 1) Lack of trust that could lead parents to enforce strict limitations on device usage; 2) Different understandings of what technology brings, i.e., views on the pros and cons of using social media; 3) Feelings of parental inadequacy due to children using technology to isolate themselves while also having access to unsuitable content for minors.

2. Parents are pessimistic about the implications of technology

– In today's situation, participants stated that parents are aware about the inevitability of technology's prominence, especially in the context of education, where children are required to use technological devices and can scour the internet for information. Children are also exposed to social media apps at home from a young age. Subsequently, parents are pessimistic about the spread of undesirable content that can be easily found online. Such content may contain portrayals that are against Islamic values and contradictory to traditional Asian culture.

3. Convenience supersedes thinking about implications

– For low to middle-income families, technology presents itself as convenience due to lack of resources. Technological devices are mediums that occupy children's time and attention, which is needed for parents who are either preoccupied with work or unable to hire outside help. While parents are aware that technology usage may be detrimental for their children, they are often unable to find better alternatives.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Establish a proactive approach regarding technology usage

- a. Parents must be clear and rational in communicating the positives and negatives of technology, as well as when implementing boundaries and limitations regarding its usage.
- b. Communication is not only through words but through actions as well. Parents must therefore exemplify a balanced attitude towards technology because certain adults exhibit unhealthy technology usage that will negatively influence children. For this reason, it is important for parents to ensure that family members share a common understanding about the role of technology in their lives, which is to educate and entertain.
- c. A balanced and moderate approach is key, as to how Islam advocates the principle of moderation (*wasatiyyah*) in everything we do.

Utilise technology to establish healthy communication among family members

- a. Technology should be utilised to establish positive communication among family members. This would include its use as a common touchpoint for connecting and empowering families.
- b. There are many simple and non-expensive examples when it comes to using technology in ways that strengthen families. These may range from the formal enrollment into online groups or programmes, to the simple act of sharing among family members on educational contents taken from social media.
- c. Sharings and discussions in the familial context must be a two-way process between parents and children. This will lead to two things: 1) The fostering of a cooperative and collaborative culture among family members; 2) The availability of a medium that facilitates

discussion between children and their parents on matters which they may have come across from the internet.

- d. Incorporating the positive use of technology among children from young may have its benefits. It provides both parents and children with opportunities to foster trust and build confidence in communicating healthily with one another over a wide range of issues, including those that would have otherwise been deemed as sensitive.

Adults must be proactive in fostering an engaging parent-child relationship

- a. Fostering a healthy online communication between parents and children must always begin with a healthy offline communication as its foundation. This means that any prevailing parent-child conflict must first be resolved in person. Otherwise, the use of technology would only promote distrust and miscommunication, exacerbating the parent-child conflict.
- b. To avoid such unfortunate situations, parents must adopt positive parenting skills that help in resolving conflicts healthily and strengthen trust with their children.
- c. This will naturally pave the way for parents to foster an engaging parent-child relationship with their children. Parents must be bold and creative in their efforts to achieve this.

Resources must be allocated to support families in using technology healthily

- a. More resources should be allocated by Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) for families, especially those from low-income backgrounds and lacking the means to provide better alternatives other than technology usage for their children.
- b. These resources should be to: 1) Raise awareness about engaging their children

on ethical technology usage; 2) Assist parents in bridging the digital divide with their children; 3) Developing frameworks to educate their children about technology usage.

- c. However, practical and structural difficulties to reach these families must be considered as they may not have the resources (time and energy) to attend physical or virtual programmes regarding this issue.
- d. Social media is the apt medium to educate parents regarding this issue through bite-sized content. At the same time, tech firms must also bear responsibility in educating children about technology usage while also regulating appropriate content for their consumption.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 2:

Parents are concerned that children are heavily reliant on digital devices as an alternative form of education and entertainment.

1. Impact of digital fatigue on children

Participants observed that digital fatigue is a result of children's early and constant usage of technology – be it for casual or educational purposes. It may lead to negative physical and mental effects. Simultaneously, consumption of digital content may lead to excessive exposure to negative news. This will shape children's mental well-being and worldview, which may subsequently lead to them distancing from their parents.

2. Lack of resources to guide families

Participants also stated that families are unsure about the implications of excessive technology usage. This can be traced to unawareness of available resources that can educate them about this issue. However, standardised resources relevant to their context are difficult to find. Parents are also sceptical about how digital devices can cultivate and strengthen the culture

of reading but recognise that isolation is not a solution.

3. Divide in digital proficiency

Expectations exist for parents and children to have access and functional knowledge of technology for school purposes. However, some families do not possess resources or natural inclination to use technological devices. This leads to a divide in terms of digital proficiency, which has an impact on an individual's educational and professional context.

4. Lack of interpersonal communication between parents and children

The lack of substantial presence of parents in the early stages of childhood may lead to certain repercussions in the context of technology usage. As it leads to children maintaining a distance from parental authority, this may result in a lack of positive communication between both parties, as well as boundaries from excessive technology usage.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Increase awareness about cyber wellness education for children

- a. Cyber wellness education should begin early, such as at the kindergarten or primary school level, due to early usage and exposure to digital technology.
- b. Children should be educated about: 1) Boundaries of technology; 2) Moderate digital usage; 3) Ways to overcome digital fatigue.
- c. As one of the issues is distance between parents and children due to technology usage, communication among family members should also be emphasised to go beyond online platforms. This will lead to children placing value in parental figures.

To inculcate children with strong principles, parents require relevant resources that must be placed strategically

- a. Resources must be strategically placed and available on different platforms, i.e., flyers, pamphlets, social media. These resources should be focused towards developing an ecosystem and community on which parents can rely.
- b. These resources can be developed in the following ways: 1) Create a database of resources about cyber wellness programmes; 2) Implement it at institutional and grassroots levels; 3) Develop a supporting ecosystem that promotes ethical and balanced digital usage.

There should be substantial output from CMOs about importance of self-reflection for growth mindset

- a. This would emphasise on: 1) Accepting changes regarding technology; 2) Framing problems correctly; 3) Realising the gap between parents and children regarding tech-savviness. This gap can subsequently be bridged through strong communication and relationship.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 3:

Parents worry about inappropriate and unsuitable contents that linger on the internet, highlighting the lack of technological awareness and ethics amongst children.

1. Widespread negative content in digital spaces

There is substantial awareness about the ubiquity of explicit content and its negative implications on children, such as hyper-sexualisation and sexual grooming. Negative content should also include the proliferation of

fake news and misinformation that has impacted how we see the world and others who are different from us.

2. Normalisation of negative content encountered online

The problem of portrayal of sexuality and violence is one that will remain accessible to children through technological devices. It has reached the point where children are desensitised to certain matters that are against religious values, such as sexual relations before marriage. These portrayals are against the ethical paradigm of our community. It is imperative for families to deal constructively with these matters. Overcoming this requires both children and parents to come together in formulating an ethical framework to understand why something is wrong/harmful or good/beneficial. It begins with trust, responsibility, and accountability.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Implement a culture of ethical and positive technology usage

- a. A healthy and critical ecosystem is needed to empower children in implementing a self-regulatory mechanism to regulate their consumption of digital services and content. This can only be facilitated through creating a culture of ethical and positive technology usage in their main spaces; home and school.
- b. There should be cooperation and communication between parents and schools. It is important for schools to formulate ethical curricula to facilitate parents in crafting a framework to deal with the issue of ethical technology usage. Parents should also be aware of the content that schools convey to students about this matter.
- c. Parents must engage in dialogue and conversations – not a top-down approach – to inculcate creative and

critical values for the purpose of guiding their children in such contexts. They should be strategic and constructive in instilling an ethical framework for their children's technology usage.

Identify external providers for parents to learn and be guided in formulating frameworks for their children

- a. There must be better outreach to improve parents' access to community-based services. Such programmes may be available but are unknown to parents. These services should aim to teach parents about crafting critical and ethical frameworks. Access to these resources would empower parents to guide and explain to children regarding inappropriate content that they encounter online. It is crucial for parents to be aware, involved, consistent and nurturing in this context.
- b. When children are exposed to explicit content, adults/parents should be educative in their approach and response, not implementing an authoritative response such as banning usage. It is impossible to censor children in our current context of avid technology usage; thus, guidance is needed from the start. The approach of asking children critical questions is advisable; what do you do after seeing it? Why must you avoid it?

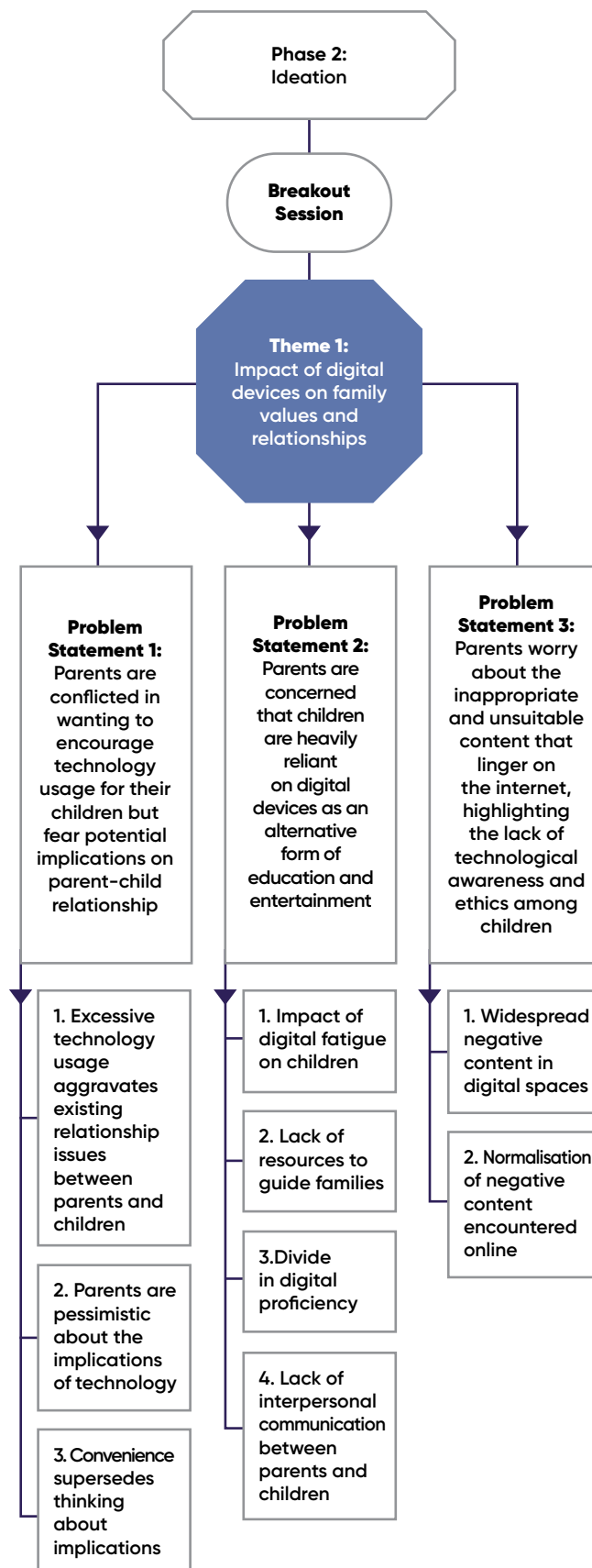


Fig. 3: Overview of ideation phase for Theme 1 of the Family Panel paper

Importance of Healthy Communication on Sexuality Education Between Family Members

PROBLEM STATEMENT 1:

There is tension between the need to talk about sexuality openly and the fear of normalising actions that contradict Islamic guidelines on sexuality.

1. Existence of tension towards engaging on sexuality issues

Participants agreed that tension exists mainly due to three reasons. First, as sexuality is regarded as a taboo topic, some parents refrain from talking about it and allow children to either discover by themselves or wait until they are older to talk about the birds and bees. Second, the lack of communication between parents and children prevents the normalisation of such conversations. It may be linked to the first factor and unhealthy family dynamics, preventing any possibility of a safe space. Third, the lack of resources and knowledge to address complex concepts such as gender dysphoria may be more familiar to the younger generation.

2. Age-appropriateness

There is uncertainty among parents about when they should engage their children on the topic of sexuality, with some believing that the best timing to discuss is when they have transitioned into adolescence. The way to discuss this topic is also deemed as challenging by the participants due to contrasting positions; in Islam, it is clear about what is right and wrong, while in modern context, a lot of things are relative. Participants also acknowledged that certain topics are grey in Islam, such as usage of pronouns. At the same time, parents are aware about the potential early exposure to sexual content and the harm it causes.

3. Widespread availability of sexual content on social media platforms

While parents are more comfortable in addressing these issues when their children are older and more mature, it is highly likely that they will be exposed to contents – through social media or games – containing sexual elements at a young age. While certain parents are passive regarding this, others wish to take a proactive stance in educating their children.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Impart information to children gradually

- a. Parents should evaluate their child's preparedness for sexual education. In current contexts, with the pervasive presence of sexual content, it is useful and relevant for parents to start teaching their children about sexuality-related matters from young. This has practical implications as well.
- b. An example would be to educate them about shyness and body awareness, with the objective of teaching them to prevent anyone from touching them inappropriately. Subsequently, other relevant topics can be taught.
- c. Sexual education should be holistic and not just revolve around the act of sexual intercourse. Rather than children being taught about sexual topics at random through social media, it is important that they be taught systemically – by adults close to them – about puberty, bodily changes, etc.
- d. Parents should be aware that social media platforms contain reels and snippets about sexual education, and therefore they must take the initiative to engage their children on such matters.

Parents should share responsibility of engaging their children on sexuality matters

- a. There is importance in having both parents engaging and teaching their children about sexual education. The reason is that different genders have different perceptions about such matters, while the dynamics of father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, mother-daughter rapport are different.
- b. To have both parents approach the matter of sexual education with a child

would benefit the child as it exposes him/her to different gender perceptions.

- c. It is also beneficial to have continual conversations with children about matters related to sexuality, especially about different views children may encounter in current contexts. This is to build trust and comfort between parents and children, which can only be developed through constant engagement.
- d. Participants also acknowledged the conservative element of the Muslim community. This makes parents reluctant to engage their children on sexuality matters and being more comfortable in letting external professionals or schools to assume the responsibility.

Instilling Islamic values in children

- a. To instil Islamic values in children, parents should first strive to understand their contexts and experiences, which differ from theirs. It is through this way that they would be able to develop the most suitable content and form of communication to engage their children.
- b. Children should also be made aware regarding the diverse elements in society, such as different economical and familial situations. This would include how other children are brought up in single-parent households. However, parents must stress that certain absolutes in the family institution must be protected, such as mandating male-to-female marriages.
- c. The objective of engaging with children about this is to educate them about the diverse and plural elements of society while striving to co-exist peacefully despite differences.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 2:

Participants highlighted the increasing deterioration of mental and physical health due to the lack of safe space to express their sexuality and identity concerns.

1. Defining Safe Spaces

Participants agreed on the importance of having safe spaces for conversations on sexuality. However, there is a need to define this safe space as it can mean differently for different groups. Participants questioned the format of these safe spaces: physical, sacred metaphysical? Or should these be spaces to digest your ideas without being given unsolicited advice? There were also suggestions to define the boundaries of the safe space so that it is not unfettered and remain culturally/religiously sensitive. The question then would be, can a safe space remain safe if the boundaries are hegemonic and not sensitive to the lived experiences of marginalised groups?

2. Lack of data

Some participants questioned the statement as there is a lack of data to support the argument on mental and physical deterioration. Participants state that – in the context of the Singapore Muslim community – there is no data correlation yet between deterioration of mental and physical health and lack of safe spaces.

3. Preparedness of *asatizah* and religious institutions

Since religious teachers play an essential role in educating the Muslim community, participants expressed concerns about the competency of *asatizah* and religious institutions to engage in these matters. Comparisons were made between local and foreign contexts; for the latter, people are more compassionate and non-judgemental. The social and cultural norms of approaching such issues were also raised, such as how *asatizah* would be judged if they raised and engaged in these matters in the public sphere.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Develop safe spaces at home

- a. It is fundamental for families to develop the culture of having safe spaces for everyone, especially children and youths. Parents must be proactive in communicating with their children that they have safe spaces in the form of their parents.
- b. The consequence of parents not developing this culture is having children and youths finding external safe spaces that hold onto values and principles that are not aligned with Islamic values.
- c. The borders and boundaries on how and when to engage in sexuality education with children must be redefined. Bread and butter issues lead parents to prioritise financial security and occupation matters.
- d. However, the openness to listen and converse with children is important as well. Stepping out of the parenting role – assuming a non-authoritative and engaging persona – can help parents to engage their children better.

Be purposeful in the space that we are providing

- a. Participants stated that safe spaces should be places where people feel safe physically to be in and also mentally comfortable to express themselves without being judged.
- b. They also stated that for an individual of LGBTQ orientation, mosques are such safe spaces for them.

To educate and equip parents about the ways of educating and conversing with children about religion

- a. To develop safe spaces, there must be more practicality and positivity when teaching religion to children and teens. The approach should not be to instil fear and guilt but rather to be mindful and humane.
- b. To achieve this, there should also be credible and streamlined resources developed by a task force which consists of *asatizah*, educators, and other professionals. These resources would address the issue of how parents should positively engage their children about sensitive sexual matters.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 3:

Parents are not well equipped with knowledge on sexuality due to lack of opportunities for parental involvement/lack of breadth on sexuality topics.

1. Fear of normalising

Participants highlighted that parents avoid discussing topics on sexuality with their children due to fear of normalising sexual norms that may contradict our Islamic values. They also raised concerns over the lack of expertise and knowledge to discuss the topic in ways that induce awareness rather than perpetuating discrimination against particular groups (i.e., LGBTQ Muslim community). However, parents today desire to be more involved in engaging with their children about such matters, such as consent and age appropriateness to engage in sexual activities. Ultimately, participants reinforced the need to change the perception of the topic as taboo, and instead find constructive ways of talking about the issue to the younger generation.

2. Different approach due to generational exposure

Participants stated that there should be recognition about the contrasting approaches of different generations regarding the teaching of sexuality topics. The older generation is more conservative than the younger generation in their approach and perspective. While different approaches and perspectives have benefits, there needs to be common ground in the way the older generation engages the younger ones regarding these matters.

3. Develop contextual parental relationships with children

Participants noted the different attitude of children in today's context as compared to the past. They observed that certain parenting methods – such as authoritativeness that is effective to a certain extent – may not be suitable to maintain secure relationships with children. Children would be unable to be vulnerable with their parents, leading to a lack of trust and communication.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Engaging children with different sexual orientations

- a. Parents' main priority should be to provide a safe and humane space for children who identify with a different sexual orientation. This is to build trust and ensure that these children remain close to their family and religion. For the latter to do so, they must consistently feel safe in communicating about such matters.
- b. While it is important, parents should not only engage their children from a *fiqh* (jurisprudential) and *hukum* (permissibility) perspective. Children today need to be engaged from a contextual perspective and in a holistic manner. This could include addressing concerns stemming from modern concepts and frameworks.

- c. There should also be a distinction between faith and behaviour. While parents may disagree with their children's different sexual orientation, parents should not equate this to their children leaving and denouncing their faith. Instead, parents should strive to ensure their children remain connected with religious values and teachings. We must also acknowledge the existing opposite stance towards this behaviour; others perceive this as a separation from religious values and teachings.
- d. To support parents in this context, participants suggested that support groups should be formed with the assistance of Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs).

Engaging in conversations at every opportunity

- a. If needed, parents should strive to form a space for them to engage their children on prevalent contemporary activism. This would help children develop their identity.
- b. Parents should take into account Singapore's cosmopolitan context. While it is needed to communicate with children from a religious perspective, the current context requires parents to also engage with modern social factors. In the context of sexuality and sexual orientations, children may not apply their religious values and instead adopt modern frameworks to decide the morality of such matters. Parents need to be cognisant about such influences in order to engage their children meaningfully and reiterate that Islamic values should be prioritised.
- c. Participants stated that practicality should also be taken into account. Parents may be more preoccupied with material provision for their children and not have the capacity and resources to engage on such matters.

Being brave and creative in finding
mediums and spaces to engage in
conversations with children

- a. Participants suggested that parents should be creative in using communication platforms such as movies and social media content to engage children in conversations.
- b. Participants also stated that a simple guide should be developed as a resource on how parents can engage children on human anatomy and sexuality matters. The guide should be categorised according to age group.

Parents should be proactive in engaging
with their children about what they have
learned in external programmes

- a. Parents must create spaces to engage with their children about what they have learned in external programmes. This is to instil value-based principles that are in accordance with religious teachings.
- b. While learning must continue in homes, not all families have the resources to engage with their children in this context. An example would be single-parent households.
- c. CMOs should organise workshops and produce educational materials on sexuality catered to both parents and children. Participants also suggested a database of resources and helplines to assist families in this context.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 4:

Asatizah and CMOs generally have the capacity and resources to conceptualise a holistic framework for sexuality education based on religious values.

1. Lack of uniformity about how to engage in issues related to sexuality

Participants observed that there are competing ideas and different opinions regarding sexuality issues and how to engage in these matters, which displays a lack of uniformity within the Muslim community. This makes it difficult for *asatizah* and CMOs to consolidate engagement efforts in these issues, especially when CMOs tend to operate in silos.

2. Need for cooperation between *asatizah* and professionals in dealing with sexuality issues

There is a need to pool skills, resources, and knowledge when engaging in these issues. *Asatizah* need support from institutions and grassroots organisations to blend religious knowledge with data analysis and contextual information. While resources may be available, there is no proper streamlining of these resources.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Establish a task force to streamline efforts

- a. A sexual education task force comprising individuals from different backgrounds should be formed to tackle the issue of sexuality. This is so that the responsibility is not pinned down to any particular group: parents, *asatizah*, or educators.
- b. Participants stated that there should be a streamlining of different expertise across CMOs and agencies to create a task force and develop a holistic framework. This framework can be used as general reference for both individuals and organisations.

- c. This task force should work cross-functionally with stakeholders such as CMOs, social service agencies, and subject matter experts. Communication strategies must convey religious and non-religious components. Participants emphasised the need to harmoniously marry content experts and mode of delivery.

Develop educational and informative programmes for the community

- a. Participants suggested that there should be Continuing Education and Training (CET) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), programmes, forums, mentoring sessions, and helplines to engage the Muslim community on sexuality-related matters.
- b. Such content and programmes should move beyond legal (*fiqh*) deliberations and use a multidisciplinary approach. For this reason, the trainers and educators should be from different disciplines.
- c. Participants underlined the importance of building upon existing programmes to educate professionals on how to

assist and engage the community in these matters. Participants cited the *Bersamamu* programme run by the Registry of Muslim Marriages and M³ as an example of how *asatizah* are empowered to be trained and equipped to help families. They also suggested for marriage preparation courses to include sexual education for children.

Customise resources based on aptitude and needs

- a. Participants stated that resources should be developed strategically for parents according to age groups. For example, preschoolers (concrete operation thinkers) are better suited for direct and simple conversations. Youths (formal operation thinkers) are better suited for debates and discussions.
- b. It is also crucial to understand the LGBTQ community's struggles to get an insider/outsider perspective. This is to avoid essentialising the issue and projecting certain presumptions that may aggravate the situation further.

CONCLUSION

This study was initiated with the main objective of **Strengthening the Family Institution through Islamic Values**, and the secondary objective to study and reflect upon: **1) The impact of digital devices on family values and relationships; 2) The importance of healthy communication on sexuality education between family members.** Based on the objectives, the panel members adopted a problem-based approach, which revolves around the pressing issues of Technology and Sexuality Education and their relation to families and children.

Utilising both qualitative and quantitative approaches, as mentioned in the first section of this study, three problem statements were defined for the theme of Technology, while four problem statements were defined for the theme of Sexuality Education.

Theme 1: Technology

1. Parents are conflicted in wanting to encourage technology use for their children but fear potential implications on the parent-child relationship.
2. Parents are concerned that children are heavily reliant on digital devices as an alternative form of education and entertainment.
3. Parents worry about inappropriate and unsuitable content on the internet, highlighting the lack of technological awareness and ethics amongst children.

These problem statements were ideated during AMP's 4th National Convention and subsequently led to contextualisation and potential solutions the community could adopt. We observe that there are two common factors found in the ideations for the aforementioned problem statements: 1) Parents must inculcate engaging parent-child relationships; 2) Identifying providers that can guide and support parents in developing relevant frameworks. (Refer to Appendix B, Figure 5.)

Based on this, we can conclude that participants involved in the convention identified these two ideations as necessary steps in equipping and educating both parents and children with the skills and knowledge for ethical and healthy

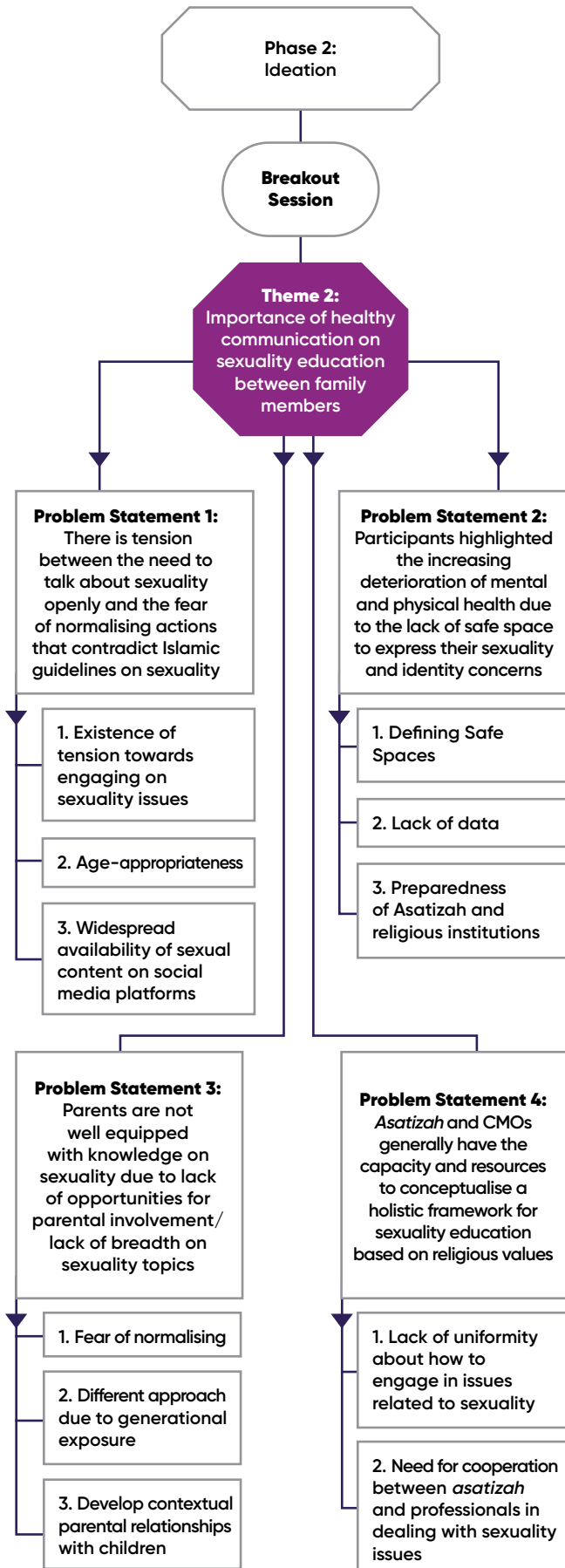


Fig. 4: Overview of ideation phase for Theme 2 of the Family Panel paper

technology usage. However, they also raised the issue about lack of resources, or rather the lack of awareness of existing resources. For this reason, relevant organisations must develop and streamline resources that would assist and empower them.

While every parent will have their own ideas and thoughts on how to develop “engaging parent-child relationships”, participants identified elements that can be defined as universally positive – to develop trust between both parties, to engage in open conversations, and to be non-authoritative in approach.

Theme 2: Sexuality Education

1. There is tension between the need to talk about sexuality openly and the fear of normalising actions that contradict Islamic guidelines on sexuality.
2. Participants highlighted the increasing deterioration of mental and physical health due to the lack of safe space to express their sexuality and identity concerns.
3. Parents are not well-equipped with knowledge on sexuality due to lack of opportunities for parental involvement/lack of breadth on sexuality topics. The design of social media may cause individuals to remain in their own circles, engaging mostly like-minded individuals. This may hinder constructive discussions on complex issues that intersect diverse interest groups.
4. *Asatizah* and Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) generally have the capacity and resources to conceptualise a holistic framework for sexuality education based on religious values.

These problem statements were ideated on during the convention and subsequently led to contextualisation and potential solutions the community could adopt. We can acknowledge that the topic of sexuality education and related issues are contentious in the community. This is reflected in the ideations for this theme, which contain different ideas and understandings regarding this matter. We need to point out that certain ideations are directed towards individuals who are in different situations regarding sexual orientation and sexual development. They include addressing children, teenagers and youths, as well as engaging those

who are certain of their sexual orientation, or those who should be engaged proactively on this matter. We acknowledge the restrictions of this study and advocate for more to be done.

We also observe that there are a few common factors in the ideations: 1) To educate and equip parents about the ways of educating and conversing with children about religion; 2) Engaging in conversations at every opportunity; 3) Be proactive in engaging with children; 4) Develop educational and informative programmes for the community. (Refer to Appendix B, Figure 6.)

From these ideations, we can conclude that participants identified the significance of parental role in developing safe and humane spaces to engage and communicate with their children, as well as the importance in developing educative resources through collaboration and cooperation that emphasise empathy and humanity. While this topic remains a contentious and sensitive issue within our community, the ideations reflect the need for the community to pool our skills and resources to engage with this matter constructively.

In alignment with the main objective of this study – **Strengthening the Family Institution through Islamic Values** – we can conclude that participants of this study reflected the *proactive and pragmatic* attitude of the Muslim community regarding these issues. They underlined the importance of proactive and consistent engagement within the family institution about these matters. They advocated for parents to develop open relationships with their children that will develop into trust and healthy communication. With this in mind, they were also realistic in the capabilities of parents to engage with their children on these matters. Hence, both themes emphasised the need for the pooling and streamlining of resources from professionals and organisations.

At the same time, while participants acknowledge that the issues revolving technology usage and sexuality education are important, they also realise that parents may be occupied with providing basic needs for their families. They are aware of the varied family situations in our community. We can observe from the ideations that participants

were pragmatic in this aspect, acknowledging the capacity of parents as working adults while bearing the responsibility to engage their children on complex issues. For this reason, it is positive to note that they developed the ideations in both familial and structural contexts.

The ideations from both these themes are developed in the context of individual families as well as structured organisations. In the context of familial relationships, they elucidated on the importance of positive values and behaviours such as healthy communication and engagement, seeking common ground for mutual understanding, and instilling a culture of learning new skills and attaining new knowledge. In the context of structural improvements, they expounded on the importance of collaboration and cooperation, the need to develop and streamline resources, as well as the importance of creating safe spaces in our community.

It is hoped that this study can provide a better understanding regarding the issues of technology usage and sexuality education in the context of Muslim families. It is our hope that this study will contribute in strengthening the family institution of the Muslim community in Singapore.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Analysis of Key Findings

Issues on the Impact of Digital Devices on Familial Values and Relationships

The Impact of Technological Disruption

Generally, participants agree that the prevalent use of technology has disrupted traditional forms of communication. Interactions between parents and their children have shifted towards digital messaging platforms like WhatsApp. This new form of communication is largely devoid of elements of face-to-face interaction, such as visual and social cues. Such changes have been understood to have ramifications on parent-child relationships. However, it is important to note that the experience of technology varies for different age groups, which in turn conjures particular expectations.

On the one hand, parents find themselves wanting to encourage their children to use technology while simultaneously fearing that it may jeopardise their relationship. Conversely, youths who are early adopters of technology would prefer to peruse the internet and social media platforms for information rather than seeking information from their parents. Such clashes in perceptions of the helpfulness of technology could be the root of conflict for many parent-child relationships today.

Technology as a Bridging Activity

Parents arguably invest in digital devices for their children for education and entertainment purposes. While technology has helped children occupy their time, excessive screen time has led to negative consequences. For younger children, over-reliance on technology could lead to withdrawal effects in the form of throwing tantrums upon not being allowed to use digital devices. Participants proposed that parents mediate technology usage by switching between different modes of sensory tech stimulation (i.e. visual to auditory) or opting for "offline" activities, such as books, to redirect them to a sense of normalcy. Weighing on the developmental dimension of technology use, participants express that parents can supervise their children by participating in the same activity, enabling them to monitor and spend time with

their children. Alternatively, parents can regulate exposure to technology use by limiting its usage to certain days.

Facilitating Technological Awareness

Participants noted that technology should not be pathologised. Instead, technology should be discussed openly between parent and child. This includes restrictions imposed on content or platforms deemed inappropriate and unsuitable for their viewing. By explaining the reasons behind such restrictions, there would be increased technological awareness and discussions on ethics surrounding tech use. One participant expressed how schools can play a role in rolling out awareness programmes with pedagogies intended to educate the student population.

However, the frequent use of technology remains a concern. Participants duly emphasised the need for a value-based approach that seeks to guide and empower children pertaining to their use of technology. By aligning the appropriateness of technology with familial values, parents hope that both younger children and youths can discern information and navigate technology independently.

The Role of Parents in Supervising Technology Usage

To reiterate, parents carry the greatest responsibility in supervising technology usage among their children. As a start, when it comes to communicating the rules on technology use, the distribution of roles between parents must be clear and equal. If parents were to face problems in taking care of their children, they should tap into social support such as immediate family members instead of relying on tech gadgets. Alternatively, parents can consider adapting traditional parenting styles to support modern parenting methods.

Issues with the Role of Families in Sexuality Education

Sexuality as a Fear-Inducing Topic

Generally, participants highlighted that parents avoid talking about sexuality to their children due to fears of normalising notions of gender fluidity

and sexual orientation. This is because children are impressionable individuals and could unconsciously imbibe such information. This may lead to them acting on likeness towards the same gender. While such correlations have yet to be proven by current literature, parents in the surveys raised concerns over the lack of expertise and knowledge to discuss the topic in ways that induce awareness rather than perpetuating discrimination against particular groups (i.e. LGBTQ Muslim community). At the same time, parents wanted to be more involved in talking about sex objectively to their children. This pertains to notions of consent and age appropriateness to engage in sexual activities. Ultimately, participants reinforced the need to steer away from viewing the topic as taboo and instead find healthy ways of talking about the issue to the younger generation.

Participants also highlighted that the formation of safe spaces is necessary to encourage deeper conversations on sexuality and a better understanding of mental health and social issues that affect marginalised groups or individuals. Moreover, humans are spatial beings that require such avenues to articulate their identities. For many Muslims, this space represents our homes, mosques and institutions. As a community, we are interdependent because what we need is meaningful psychosocial recognition. Unfortunately, some respondents argue that many LGBTQ individuals do not enjoy this privilege. It is mainly why they form organisations that serve as support groups that allow them to safely articulate their identities in order to remain mentally sane and physically healthy.

Sexuality Education as Firmly Rooted in Religious Doctrine

Undeniably, religious connotations underlying the topic of sex and sexuality are correlated with notions of guilt and inferiority. Fundamentally, faith-based approaches are largely rooted in practising abstinence with an emphasis on gender binary. With religious views dominating sexuality education, particularly in *madrassahs*, the lack of diversity in gender representation may trickle into intolerance towards those who deviate from the norm. Interestingly, one participant shared how faith-based pedagogies should be centred around notions of *rahmah* and *fitrah* constituting the

essence of psychoeducation. It is also emphasised how we should increase fundamental knowledge of our faith to improve understanding of the unique experiences of such persons. In the case of the LGBTQ Muslim community, it is encouraged that families work on reframing their views towards helping them balance between the two identities rather than forgoing one for the other. By providing them space to navigate around notions of sexuality and religious identity, we ensure that families avoid dismissing their condition altogether and instead reinforce the family unit as the primary support system.

Sexuality as a Discourse is Complex and Highly Contested

Interestingly, tensions surrounding the topic of sexuality reside within Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs). One participant stated how competing interests and opinions of different organisations towards notions of sexuality (i.e. homosexuality) are highly contested, giving the impression of lack of uniformity. This makes it difficult for CMOs to consolidate advocacy efforts for certain issues, especially when they tend to operate in silos. Given that issues of gender and sexuality can be highly convoluted, participants expressed the need to streamline efforts such that the Malay/Muslim community is reaffirmed by the current leadership. Alluding to the role of ground-up initiatives, it is stated that varying levels of operation range from reactionary to highly committed behaviours that are dependent on the timing of events. In this regard, information pertaining to the frequency of activities for such advocate groups has yet to be explored.

The Role of Parents in Sexuality Education

Lack of opportunities for parental involvement stems from broader structural issues such as poverty or the lack of quality time due to work commitments. Thus, parenting workshops on sexuality should go beyond the abstinence narrative and take into account other components such as the emphasis on psychotherapy and the focus on structural issues, i.e. socio-economic conditions and generational trauma. This is to ensure that efforts are not palliative; rather they can provide transformative changes in the long run.

Appendix B:

	Proactive approach	Utilise technology positively	Engaging parent-child relationship
Parents are conflicted in wanting to encourage technology use for their children but fear potential implications on parent-child relationship	✓	✓	✓
Parents are concerned that children are heavily reliant on digital devices as an alternative form of education and entertainment			✓
Parents worry about the inappropriate and unsuitable contents that linger on the internet			

Fig. 5: Solutions addressing problem statements of Theme 1: Technology

	Impart information gradually	Share responsibility between parents	Instil Islamic values	Develop safe spaces at home	Be purposeful in developing safe spaces	Educate and equip parents
The tension between the need to talk about sexuality openly and the fear of normalising actions that contradict Islamic guidelines on sexuality	✓	✓	✓			
Participants highlighted the increasing deterioration of mental and physical health due to the lack of safe space to express their sexuality and identity concerns				✓	✓	✓
Parents are not well equipped with knowledge on sexuality due to lack of opportunities for parental involvement/lack of breadth on sexuality topics				✓		✓
Asatizah and CMOs generally have the capacity and resources to conceptualise a holistic framework for sexuality education based on religious values						✓

Fig. 6: Solutions addressing problem statements of Theme 2: Sexuality Education

Increase awareness about cyber wellness	Develop relevant resources for parents	Develop mindset for self-growth	Develop culture of ethical technology use	Identify external providers
✓	✓	✓		✓
			✓	✓

Openness towards children with different orientation	Consistently engage in conversations	Creativity in utilising mediums to engage children	Proactive in engaging children	Establish task force to streamline efforts	Develop holistic programmes for the community	Customised resources
	✓	✓	✓			
✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
				✓	✓	✓

SENIORS

INTRODUCTION

The Seniors Panel consists of:

1. **Muhammed Faiz Edwin Ignatious**, member of AMP Singapore Board of Directors and Deputy Director (Legal) at the Singapore Food Agency (SFA)
2. **Siti Mariam Mohamad Salim**, member of AMP Singapore Board of Directors and Therapist at Private Space
3. **Dr Nur Farhan Alami**, Geriatrician Specialist, Alami Clinic
4. **Abdul Hamid Abdullah**, Golden Age Lifestyle Coach
5. **Normala Manap**, Director, Age Matters Consultancy and Training

In January 2022, the panel members convened and conducted extensive discussions to identify the various problems, issues, definitions, complexities, and personalities involved in the matter at hand.

After deliberation, the Panel established three main objectives for the study.

- The first objective was to **understand the issues caregivers face when taking care of seniors**.
- Following that, we sought to **understand whether these issues are being resolved within Singapore's current caregiving system**.
- Finally, we wanted to **see the impacts that cultural values such as filial piety have on perceptions of caregiving in Singapore**.

Before unpacking the study's objectives, it is worthwhile to understand what the eldercare landscape and the ageing process look like in Singapore.

The ageing population in Singapore is a topic of increasing concern, as the State grapples with how to promote successful ageing among its citizens. Successful ageing can be defined as high physical, psychological and social functioning in old age without major disease¹. The government has focused on several pillars to promote successful ageing, including personal responsibility and self-reliance, as well as family relations. Through tax incentives and legislation to enforce parental maintenance by adult children, the State has made it clear that individuals and their families are the primary pillars of geriatric care, with the government only playing a residual role in providing safety nets.

However, as population ages and the number of elderly citizens increases, the need for alternative sources of care also increases. Community-based care for seniors has become increasingly prevalent, with the Ministry of Health launching the Agency for Integrated Care in 2009 to enhance and integrate the Long-Term Care sector. This aligns with the "Many Helping Hands" approach that reflects the tripartite partnership of the government, community, and family in the delivery of community-based services.

¹Rowe, John W., and Robert L. Kahn. "Successful Aging." *The Gerontologist*, vol. 37, 1997, pp. 433-440.

Currently, there are a variety of community-based services available to care for the elderly, including home nursing services, senior citizens' clubs, and day care centres. However, as caregiving tenures have lengthened due to increased life spans, the burden on caregivers has also increased – both financially and emotionally. This has led to more children of elderly parents looking to providers of eldercare for help. At the same time, caregivers must deal with the stigma of getting outside help – a stigma rooted in Singapore's tradition of filial piety, which values family involvement in caring for older relatives. Appendix A goes into more detail on what filial piety looks like in Singapore.

Paper Outline

This paper adopts a qualitative approach in three stages:

1. It will first explain the methodology of defining the problem statements, which includes a survey and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
2. It will expound on the key findings and the problem statements derived
3. It will explore the methodology of the ideating stage, and discuss the results

The subsequent sections outline the methodology, findings, and recommendations of each phase.

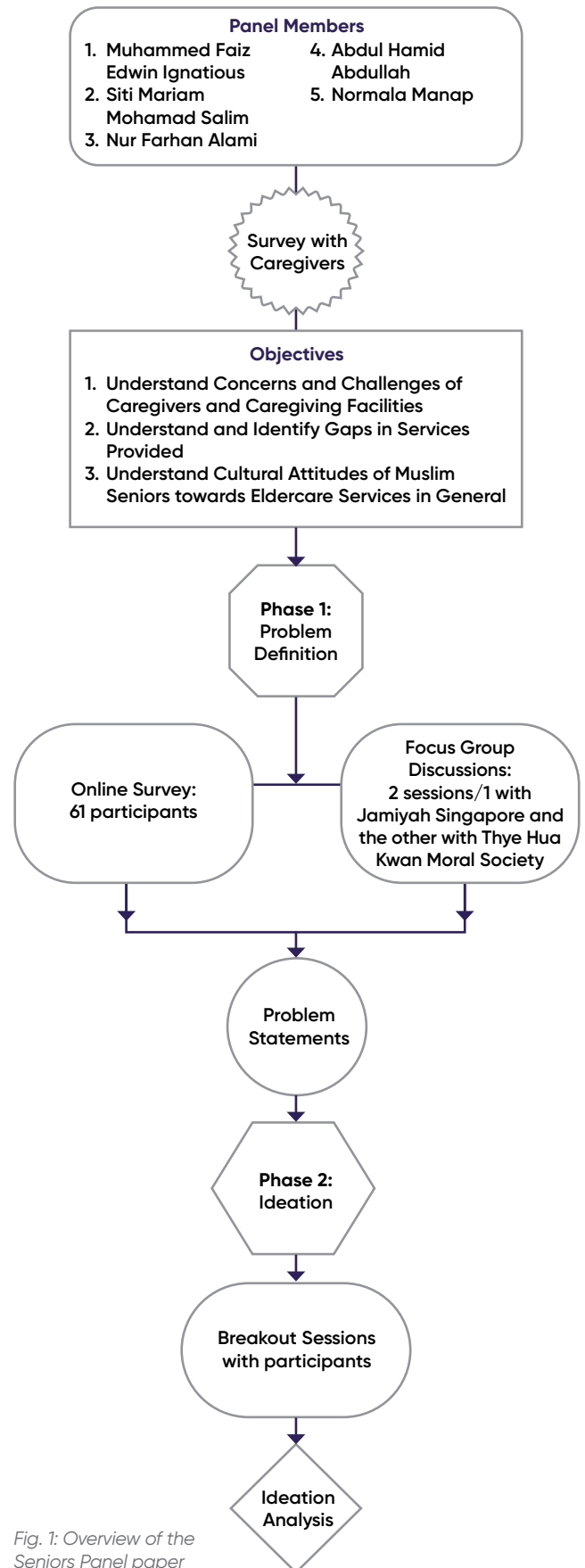


Fig. 1: Overview of the Seniors Panel paper

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Methodology

Perception Survey

A Perception Survey was conducted to gain a better understanding of the prevailing attitudes of the Muslim community towards ageing issues and services. Respondents were aged 20 and above from various income levels, educational backgrounds and races. In total, 61 respondents participated, of which more than half were acting as caregivers.

Overall, extrapolated data from the survey substantiated the view that more robust community care support and more advocacy groups for eldercare issues in the Muslim community are needed.

Face-to-Face Interviews

In addition to designing surveys, AMP also collaborated with research firm Blackbox to conduct interviews with the Muslim community to increase understanding of aspirations and expectations the local Malay/Muslim community has towards various social issues.

Overall, 977 interviews were conducted with members of the Muslim community, grassroots leaders, and others holding prominent leadership positions such as religious educators and civil servants. From these interviews, we realised that there was a deepening cultural divide between the older and younger generations of Muslims, which informed our surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). We included questions about how cultural perceptions are impacting the notions of senior caregiving and filial piety in the younger and older generations of Muslims in Singapore.

Focus Group Discussions

We also held FGDs with six practitioners from the caregiving sector. They were chosen for three reasons, as we wanted to:

1. Understand their concerns and challenges formed through experience in providing community care services
2. Understand and identify gaps in the services provided

3. Understand cultural attitudes of Muslim seniors towards eldercare services in general

Respondents had a full understanding of the research projects prior to interviews and were also guaranteed full anonymity. The interviews were conducted in English and were recorded in both video and audio for transcription. Interview data were then analysed to identify salient issues and patterns.

While we believe that insights gathered are necessary to focus on the chosen theme – by highlighting key areas of concern – we acknowledge the limitations of ground-sensing interviews. Speaking to practitioners limits our scope as they provide only case-specific responses. It would be imprecise and unreliable to solely work with findings from these interviews.

Key Findings

The following section delves into key findings of the pre-convention data collection. The findings are separated into four key topics, namely:

1. Awareness of the challenges of elderly care
2. The way senior services are operated
3. The type of programmes in senior care centres
4. The role of the Muslim community in raising awareness of senior issues among Muslim families

Appendices A and B provide more information on the senior caregiving infrastructure in Singapore.

Awareness: Knowledge of caregivers' challenges but not how to overcome them

- Respondents were aware of the challenges of ageing, but were less aware of the services and programmes available to help people manage these concerns.
- More than half of the respondents felt they were sufficiently aware of ageing and related matters.
- The top two concerns for respondents were health and financial issues.
- 65.6% of respondents were worried about the deterioration of their health, which included

both physical and mental health concerns such as stroke, diabetes, dementia, boredom and loneliness.

60.6% of respondents were concerned about financial issues related to healthcare costs, such as having insufficient assets to pay off medical bills and the perceived high medical costs in Singapore.

29.5% of respondents listed the process of caregiving as a concern in relation to ageing, with worries including not having enough caregivers and feeling guilty of being a burden to their adult children.

While respondents were aware of the challenges of caregiving, they were less aware of the services and programmes available to help them manage.

Only 36% of respondents rated themselves as having a good, very good, or excellent awareness of the programmes and services available to seniors, with 64% demonstrating a less than good level of awareness.

Only 11 respondents were able to list down services and programmes available for seniors, and only 3 could cite programmes and services offered by Muslim providers.

These findings are significant, given that 60.7% of respondents were caregivers, showing how Muslim caregivers are unaware of the resources available to help them address the challenges faced.

Operations of senior services: More cultural sensitivity, located closer to caregivers, and affordable

Muslim seniors in Singapore face challenges accessing senior care services due to factors such as religious needs, distance from home, and costs.

Respondents wanted senior services to cater to Muslim seniors' needs, including the presence of Muslim staff, halal food, and activities that cater to their spiritual needs.

Many respondents desired senior services to be located closer to their homes or to be more accessible via public transport.

Respondents also wanted more affordable services for seniors and greater subsidies from the government.

Home nursing services and day care centres are two senior care services that the Muslim community in Singapore wants more of.

Home nursing services enable seniors to live in their own homes while receiving the support they need, which is attractive to caregivers who feel a sense of filial piety.

Day care centres are seen as a significant resource for caregivers to tap on, as seniors only stay there during the day and return home at night, so caregivers can avoid the stigma of being unfilial.

Programmes: More Muslim activities and reduced language barriers

Respondents hoped for more daily programmes for seniors that are catered to the Muslim community.

Senior services are currently run by both Muslim and non-Muslim centres.

Respondents were worried that non-Muslim organisations running care centres decrease the likelihood of Muslim-centric activities.

Respondents acknowledged that some efforts have been made to cater to the Muslim population, but more needs to be done.

Respondents hoped for senior services to introduce more Quran-reading sessions, allocated time slots for prayers, *dhikr* sessions, and having more Muslims in the cohort to overcome the perceived lack of Islamic activities.

A Jamiyah Singapore representative suggested carrying out "blended programmes" such as karaoke and storytelling in the Malay language, which can be inclusive of the Muslim community without being purely religious in nature.

Respondents noticed that many staff in senior services speak mainly in English, which diminishes the cultural and religious sensitivity of staff towards Muslim needs.

- Respondents were sceptical about how staff with different religious and cultural backgrounds can adversely affect the experience of seniors in day care centres and other senior services.
- Senior services may have “programmes (that) are held during prayer timings” or they even make accommodations for seniors to have the “timing and opportunity to break for prayers”.
- Accommodations for religion are possible, although such accommodations are rarely requested.
- 88.5% of respondents felt there is a need for an advocacy group that informs and educates non-Muslim organisations about activities that are sensitive to Muslim needs.
- Advocacy efforts also need to be targeted towards the Muslim community, who are perceived to feel passive towards issues faced by seniors.
- Day care centres offer rehabilitation and nursing services while keeping seniors occupied with various activities. These help maintain their sense of independence and mental health.
- Respondents highlighted the importance of seniors remaining active mentally and socially to decrease their sense of loneliness and increase their perceived social support.

- piety and advocating caregiving roles to be carried out by non-family members.
- Mosques can serve as a site for senior caregiving by conducting activities specifically geared towards elders, such as Quran recitation classes and befriending.
- Some mosques have already begun serving as go-to points for people with dementia, setting a precedent for more incorporation of initiatives that serve seniors in the Muslim community.
- Respondents wanted advocacy efforts to reach out to Muslim youths, who are perceived to have a diminished sense of filial piety towards caring for seniors.
- Future research could investigate advocacy efforts to foster intergenerational consensus towards the question of caring for seniors.

Advocacy: Role of the Muslim community

- 70.5% of respondents agreed that the Muslim community is passive towards issues faced by seniors due to the high sensitivity of eldercare issues and the concept of filial piety.
- Receiving care from one’s family is ideal in the Muslim community, and there is stigma towards outsourcing caregiving to external programmes and services.
- Respondents hoped to see a gradual shift towards discussing senior care issues and expanding the definition of filial piety to include caregiving beyond family members.
- Mosques in Singapore were identified as a key player in expanding existing definitions of filial

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

From research, three problem statements were created for the Seniors panel. All three problem statements were crafted to approach senior caregiving from a holistic perspective, dealing with issues faced by caregivers, seniors, and the larger community.



Fig. 2: Issues related to senior caregiving in Singapore

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

1

The community is aware of age-related concerns that seniors face but not the resources available to resolve these concerns.

Guiding Questions During Ideation

- What are some issues seniors face in old age?
- What channels are available to resolve caregiving issues?
- What resources are needed to resolve these issues?

- What notions of filial piety exist in the Muslim community in Singapore?
- Why do notions of filial piety play such an oversized role in determining who is responsible for taking care of seniors?
- How do these notions impact our impression of caregiving?

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

2

The current caregiving system in Singapore does not meet Muslim seniors' needs.

Guiding Questions During Ideation

- What is the caregiving system like for seniors in Singapore?
- What are the needs of Muslim seniors?
- How are seniors' needs being fulfilled or not fulfilled?

From our pre-convention research, we found that caregivers need more awareness of how to overcome challenges associated with caregiving. Hence, the first problem statement we arrived at is as follows: **the community is aware of age-related concerns that seniors face but not the resources available to resolve these concerns.**

We also found that existing services do not cater to the preferences of Muslim seniors or their caregivers, which leads us to the second problem statement: **the current caregiving system in Singapore does not meet Muslim seniors' needs.**

Finally, we found that Singaporean Muslims believe that conceptions of filial piety must acknowledge the challenges of providing care for seniors. Additionally, our surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) highlighted that individuals in the Muslim community must lead the way in altering the concepts of filial piety. Hence, the final problem statement relates to all of the above, and it is: **traditional notions of filial piety prevent important discussions about the challenges of caregiving.**

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

3

Traditional notions of filial piety prevent important discussions about the challenges of caregiving.

Guiding Questions During Ideation

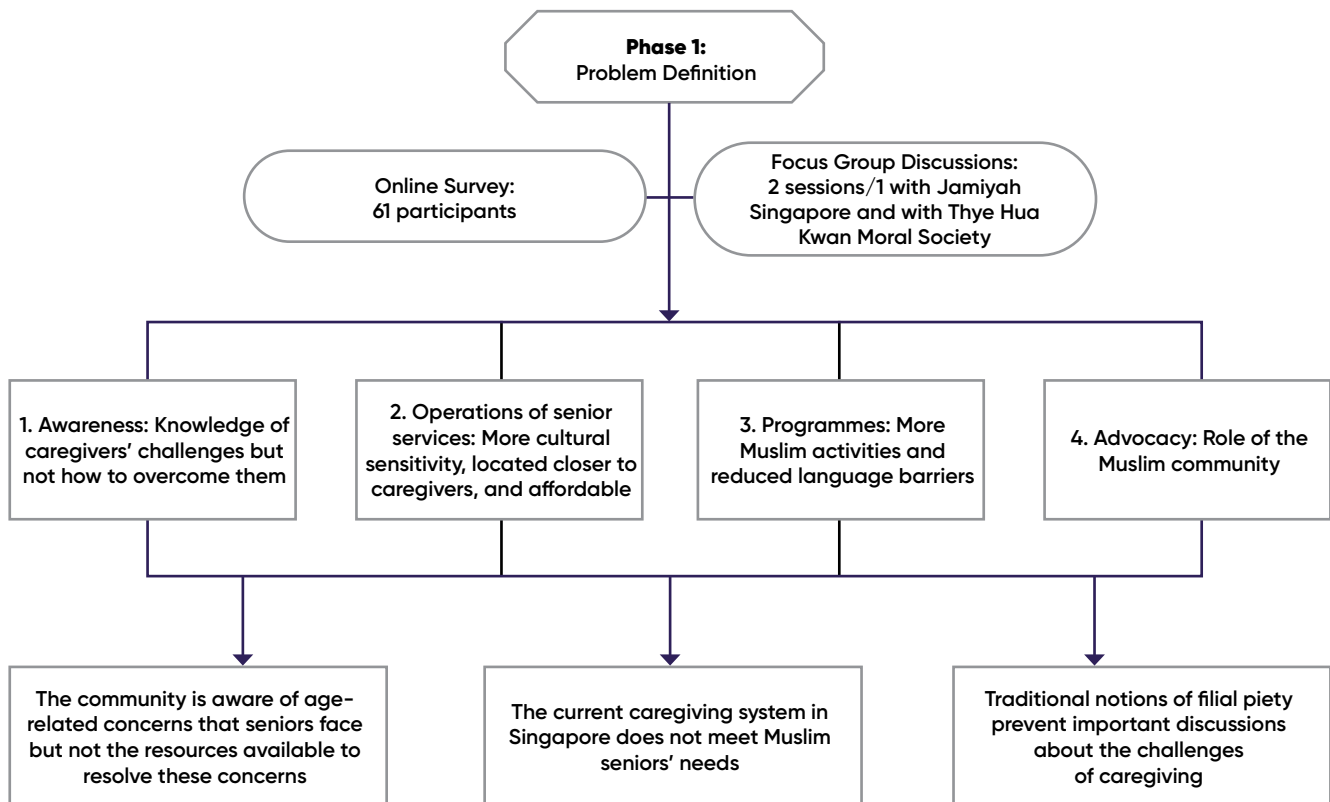


Fig. 3: Overview of ideation phase for the Seniors Panel paper

IDEATION

One key research method used to derive solutions for ageing issues in the Malay/Muslim community was an ideation breakout session (conducted on the convention day). This section will outline the methodology, key findings, and ideation analysis of the breakout session.

Breakout Session Methodology

A total of 72 people participated in the breakout session. The ideation session was structured to encourage active participation and engagement from all attendees, with a total of 10 breakout groups. Each group was assigned a facilitator and a scribe, and they were tasked to ideate on the three problem statements related to ageing in the community. These problem statements were developed based on prior research, and were intended to serve as a starting point for discussions.



Fig. 4: Overview of ideation phases

There were three phases of the breakout session, as follows:

Phase 1: Participants were asked to provide input on whether the problem statements were true to their experiences.

Phase 2: Once participants provided input, they crafted rephrased/renewed problem statements and set the parameters of discussion for each problem statement. This allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by the community, and helped to ensure that the ideation process was grounded in real-world examples.

Phase 3: The ideation process began. Participants were encouraged to think creatively and propose solutions to the problems identified.

Solutions proposed during the ideation session were diverse, covering a wide range of topics including healthcare, financial support and community engagement. The goal of the session was to generate a variety of potential solutions that could be refined and further developed in the future. A simplified diagram showing the solutions for each problem statement can be found in Appendix C.

The report highlights three major themes related to caregiving for seniors in Singapore. These themes include increasing awareness of available resources, meeting the unique needs of Muslim seniors, and challenging traditional notions of filial piety.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 1:

The community is aware of age-related concerns that seniors face but not the resources available to resolve these concerns.

1. Increasing awareness of solutions – Participants felt that more could be done to increase awareness of the solutions available to caregivers to resolve age-related issues, particularly in highlighting the kinds of help available to relieve certain conditions faced by seniors. Participants also found that caregivers were not putting enough effort into looking for resources, which aligns with the prevailing ideology in Singapore that individuals must be able to help themselves.

2. Fatigue from caring for seniors – Overall, participants found caregiving challenging and demanding, especially when it involved caring for seniors with chronic conditions. They thought it was important for caregivers to have access to the right resources and support to help them manage caring for their loved ones. However, many caregivers struggle to find the information and resources they need, which can lead to feelings of isolation and burnout. The lack of awareness and resources for caregivers can also have a negative impact on the seniors being cared for, as they may not be receiving the best possible care.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Collaboration among organisations, government, and community groups is essential to improve caregiving awareness and support

Participants believed that organisations, mosques, government bodies, and community groups need to work together more to increase awareness of the available resources and support for caregivers in Singapore. Although these institutions were mentioned, respondents also acknowledged that organisations such as mosques and community groups already have an overwhelming burden to resolve other social issues, and that other institutions must step up and spearhead efforts to raise awareness and provide support for senior caregiving. By providing more information and support to caregivers, we can help ensure that seniors receive the best possible care and that caregivers are able to manage the demands of caregiving. Setting up an advocacy group that is focused on raising awareness for senior care was suggested as a way to address the lack of relevant information for caregivers to select appropriate avenues of senior care.

Mass media should actively promote alternative forms of senior care to reduce stigma and increase awareness of available resources

Participants collectively emphasised the need for mass media and social media to actively promote solutions for senior care. Currently, participants found that media channels only promote one form of geriatric care, which idealises the family as the main source of caregiving. However, such depictions provide no alternative way of caregiving in a good light, which deepens the stigma against sourcing for care outside of the family. Hence, to raise awareness of alternative forms of senior care in a way that is detached from stigma, mass media should actively highlight the lives and responsibility of healthcare professionals in the senior care sector. Importantly, social media should also be harnessed to reach out to the younger generation, who will constitute the next generation of caregivers.

Empower caregivers to proactively find solutions for their parents through targeted outreach and education on the inevitability of eldercare

At the same time, participants acknowledged that caregivers should be more proactive in finding solutions for parents approaching their golden years. To encourage proactiveness among caregivers, more outreach needs to be done to help the general population think about eldercare for seniors around them and even for their future ageing selves. By instilling that eldercare is inevitable, participants believe that caregivers can begin their search for eldercare solutions and contingencies early on in life.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 2:

The current caregiving system in Singapore does not meet Muslim seniors' needs.

1. Needs of Muslim seniors – Participants found that the current caregiving system in Singapore

does not meet the needs of Muslim seniors. Currently, many senior centres are operated by Christian organisations, which could result in a mismatch between the makeup of the seniors and the care staff. This can complicate catering to the needs of Muslim seniors.

2. Being Muslim in old age – Participants thought there was a need for clearer demarcation and listing of what Muslim seniors require, as being Muslim in old age brings about different priorities. These requirements need to be heard and catered to, including understanding cultural and religious practices that are important to them, and ensuring that eldercare programmes are designed with these considerations in mind.

3. Preferences of Muslim seniors – Additionally, it is important to consider that there may be certain things that Muslim seniors may not be fond of, and these must be considered when creating programmes for them. With an ageing population, it is essential that the needs of all seniors are met, including those in the Muslim community.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Government support required for the establishment of Muslim-specific senior centres staffed with trained individuals to meet the unique needs of Muslim seniors

The government must take urgent action to address the gap in care for Muslim seniors in Singapore. One crucial step is to provide increased funding for the establishment of Muslim-specific senior centres. These centres, staffed by individuals who are trained in the integration of Muslim values and operations, would be better equipped to meet the unique needs of Muslim seniors.

Foster cultural and religious sensitivity in senior care centres to better serve the specific needs and desires of Muslim seniors

According to the experiences of Muslim caregivers, Muslim seniors have specific

preferences, including a desire to be closer to God and to practise their religion more closely. Therefore, it is essential that senior care centres are more attuned to these needs. This can be achieved through staff training and education programmes that focus on cultural and religious sensitivity.

Moreover, the **government should also establish a mechanism to gather feedback** from Muslim seniors and their caregivers in order to understand and address their needs better. This will help in creating programmes that are tailored to the needs of Muslim seniors, which will improve their quality of life. Overall, participants found that it is necessary for the government to take steps to ensure that Muslim seniors receive the care they deserve. The provision of adequate funding, staff training, and an emphasis on cultural and religious sensitivity is essential in achieving this goal. Specifically, a government or civil society organisation could be formed to simultaneously gather feedback and act as an educational resource centre for Muslim caregivers considering caregiving solutions.

PROBLEM STATEMENT 3:

Traditional notions of filial piety prevent important discussions about the challenges of caregiving.

- 1. Feelings of responsibility to care for ageing parents** – Participants experienced pressure in taking on the responsibility of caring for ageing parents. This pressure often comes from societal expectations, as well as from the parents themselves, who may have high expectations of their children to provide care.
- 2. Western conceptions of filial piety** – The increased use of social media in recent years has led to the spread of Western concepts of filial piety that may not align with traditional Asian concepts. This can create tension and conflicts within families, as well as a sense of pressure and responsibility for the caregiving children. In recent years, the pressure on children to provide

care for their ageing parents has become more prevalent. Hence, it is important to understand and alleviate the cultural and societal factors that contribute to this pressure. It is clear that participants saw an urgent need for solutions to address the pressure placed on caregivers to take on the responsibility of caring for their ageing parents.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Normalise alternative forms of care such as sourcing for care outside of the household

More needs to be done to reassess traditional concepts of filial piety, which often involve children assuming the primary caregiving role. To address this issue, participants proposed that there be more normalisation of alternative forms of care, such as hiring domestic helpers or utilising day care services.

Engage Islamic community leaders to address traditional expectations of filial piety to support modern Muslim caregivers

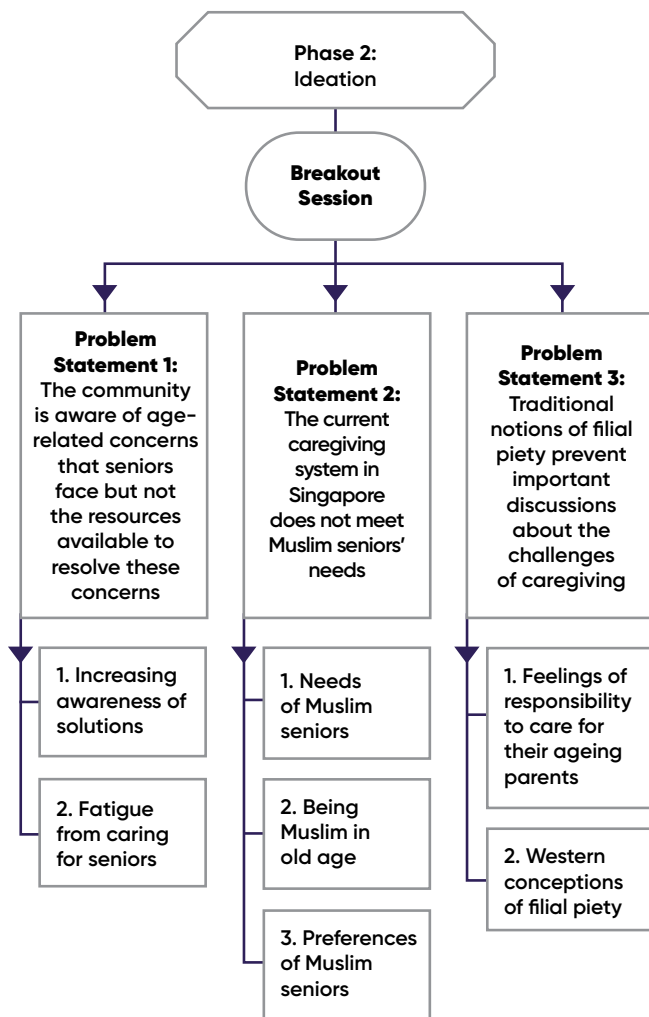
This can be done by ensuring leaders at Islamic community nodes, such as mosques and religious classes, are comfortable in creating an open forum with everyday Muslims. This will undoubtedly involve analysing the more Westernised ideas of filial piety that have been spread through the use of social media, and seeing how those beliefs can be harmonised with traditional Muslim notions of filial piety. Furthermore, there needs to be greater acknowledgement that many caregivers have other responsibilities – involving their personal physical, mental and emotional health, childcare, self-care, financial, career, marital, lifestyle, cultural and social obligations (and more) – that may prevent them from adhering to traditional expectations.

Improve domestic helpers' caregiving skills and reduce stigma by elevating their reputation as skilled caretakers

At the same time, there should be more training and resources available to ensure that domestic helpers are equipped with the necessary skills to provide high quality care for seniors. The reputation of domestic helpers and non-familial caretakers can be elevated societally if they are known to be skilled in eldercare. This may reduce the stigma of engaging individuals outside of the family for help in providing senior care.

CONCLUSION

As part of the AMP 4th National Convention, the Seniors Panel conducted an investigation on the state of senior care for Muslims in Singapore, with an equal focus on how seniors experience care, the care systems available for seniors at the State level, and how caregivers deal with the challenges of caregiving. In an effort to gather first-hand information, both the caregivers and the staff at senior care centres were interviewed, which allowed qualitative data to be gathered. After analysing the interview and survey findings, three problem statements were generated for the Seniors Panel. These findings are also available in the appendixes.



Problem Statement 1:

The community is aware of age-related concerns that seniors face but not the resources available to resolve these concerns

The findings of the study indicate that caregivers in Singapore encounter significant challenges in obtaining adequate resources and support in caring for their ageing loved ones. The study highlights lack of awareness of available resources among caregivers, which could lead to isolation and burnout. These challenges highlight the importance of developing collaborative efforts among organisations, government bodies, and community groups to increase awareness of available resources and support for caregivers in Singapore.

Moreover, the media plays a critical role in promoting alternative forms of senior care to reduce stigma and increase awareness of available resources. Our study also suggests that empowering caregivers through targeted outreach and education can be effective in ensuring they proactively find solutions for their seniors. This includes education on the inevitability of eldercare and providing caregivers with the necessary skills and knowledge to care for their loved ones. Such empowerment can reduce the burden on caregivers and promote care for ageing loved ones.

Fig. 5: Overview of ideation for the Seniors Panel paper



Problem Statement 2:
**The current caregiving system in
Singapore does not meet Muslim
seniors' needs**

In Singapore, Muslim seniors have cultural and religious needs that require specific attention in the caregiving system. However, the current system falls short in meeting these needs. Therefore, it is recommended that Muslim-specific senior centres be established, possibly through a co-funding arrangement between the government and the Muslim community; and staffed with trained personnel to address the unique requirements of Muslim seniors. These centres would provide culturally and religiously sensitive services that cater to the specific needs and desires of Muslim seniors.

To better serve Muslim seniors in senior care centres, there is a need to foster cultural and religious sensitivity among staff. This includes training and education to ensure that staff members are aware of and can meet the unique needs of Muslim seniors. The government should also establish a mechanism to gather feedback from Muslim seniors and their caregivers to understand and address their needs better. This feedback can be used to develop policies and guidelines that support the cultural and religious needs of Muslim seniors.



Problem Statement 3:
**Traditional notions of filial piety
prevent important discussions
about the challenges of
caregiving**

In Singapore, traditional notions of filial piety can hinder discussions about caregiving, which can be detrimental to the well-being of both caregivers and their ageing loved ones. Caregivers often feel pressured to take on the responsibility of caregiving, which can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed and isolation. Encouraging open and honest conversations about caregiving can help reduce the stigma surrounding the challenges of caregiving, and promote greater awareness of the available resources and support.

To support caregivers, the government should consider providing more financial assistance and access to respite care to alleviate some of the stress associated with caregiving. By challenging traditional notions of filial piety and providing more support for caregivers, Singapore can promote a more compassionate and sustainable caregiving system that benefits both caregivers and their ageing loved ones.

In conclusion, the report highlights the need for increased awareness of available resources, meeting the unique needs of Muslim seniors, and challenging traditional notions of filial piety in Singapore. By addressing these issues, we ensure that seniors receive the best possible care, and that caregivers are better equipped to manage the demands of caregiving. Collaboration among organisations, government bodies, and community groups is essential in achieving this goal.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Overview of the Senior Caregiving System in Singapore

In Singapore, the government has focused on several pillars to promote active ageing. At the individual level, policies urge citizens to exercise personal responsibility and self-reliance. At the familial level, social policies promote intergenerational dependence, which translate into tax incentives and legislation for children who are responsible for their elders' well-being.

The Active Ageing Policy Framework developed by the World Health Organization (2002) (Figure 6) summarises how the broad determinants of health affect the process of ageing, namely in terms of health and quality of life of older persons. Though difficult to attribute direct causation to any one determinant, a substantial body of evidence suggests that all these factors – and the interplay between them – are good predictors of how well both individuals and populations age. This framework is a useful tool in allowing us to evaluate the effectiveness of current ageing policies/programmes in place, as well as identify potential areas of concern regarding successful ageing.

The Determinants of Active Ageing



Fig. 6: Active Ageing Policy Framework²

² World Health Organization. "Active Ageing: A Policy Framework." 2002. Accessed 11 January 2022. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/67215/WHO_NMH_NPH_02.8.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

³ Ministry of Health. "Action Plan for Successful Ageing." 2016. Accessed 11 January 2022. <https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider3/action-plan/action-plan.pdf>.

Locally, the Action Plan for Successful Ageing, which provides a framework for Singaporeans to age more confidently and gracefully, was jointly developed by government agencies, voluntary welfare and non-profit organisations, academia, businesses, and union members, with feedback from public consultations. The Plan includes more than 70 initiatives spanning 12 areas:



These 12 areas are expected to prepare Singapore for rapid population ageing in the next decade.

Appendix B: Ideals of Successful Ageing in Singapore

Following are key extrapolations from the action plan that will be useful in setting the context and directions for deeper conversations³.

Successful and Active Ageing

To better understand the seniors' perceptions of physical, psychological and social health, as well as the processes of adaptation and self-management of these health perceptions, a study was conducted

with ethnically diverse seniors in Singapore aged 60 and above, resulting in the following.

Five main themes emerged regarding perceptions of physical, psychological and social health:

- 1 Slowing down
- 2 Relationship harmony
- 3 Financial harmony
- 4 Social connectedness
- 5 Eating together

Adaptation and self-management of these health perceptions revealed six additional themes:

- a. Keep moving
- b. Keep learning, where continued self-determination and resilience is a key method in adapting to negative thoughts about declining physical health
- c. Adopting avoidant coping behaviours
- d. The "It feels good to do good" mantra where finding meaning in life is to help others
- e. The "power of prayer" perception, which highlighted how seniors relegated responsibilities to a higher spiritual power
- f. Social participation, which included engaging in community and religious social activities⁴

These findings are helpful in highlighting specific cultural nuances in seniors' perceptions of health, particularly psychological and social health, which

can allow us to develop more targeted intervention programmes and better methods of measuring seniors' health in our community.

Social Participation

A continuum of social participation amongst seniors has been studied extensively through ethnography and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The results from this study are categorised as follows:

- 1 Marginalisation and exclusion
- 2 "Comfort-zoning" alone
- 3 Seeking consistent social interactions
- 4 The expansion of social networks
- 5 Giving back to society

Notably, seeking consistent social interactions was shaped not only by a preference for cultural grouping and ethnic values but also a desire for emotional safety⁵.

These aspects of social participation are important to consider, given that participation can improve the mental health of seniors. Depression is the most common mental and emotional disorder that emerges in the later stages of life, and one that is closely associated with poor health, disability, mortality, and suicide. The risk factors of depression in later life, especially psychosocial factors, were studied among a sample comprising 162 community-dwelling Singaporeans aged 65 years and above. Results from the hierarchical regression analysis show that 32.9% of the variance in geriatric depression can be explained by three psychosocial factors – loneliness, perceived social support, and the emotional regulation component of resilience were significantly associated with depression in seniors⁶.

⁴ Shiraz, Farah, Hildon, Zoe, and Vrijhoef, Hubertus. "Exploring the Perceptions of the Ageing Experience in Singaporean Older Adults: A Qualitative Study." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, vol. 35, 2020, pp. 389-408. doi:10.1007/s10823-020-09414-8.

⁵ Aw, Su, et al. "Explaining the Continuum of Social Participation among Older Adults in Singapore: From 'Closed Doors' to Active Ageing in Multi-Ethnic Community Settings." *Journal of Aging Studies*, vol. 42, 2017, pp. 46-55. doi:10.1016/j.jaging.2017.07.002.

⁶ Li, Jinhui, Theng, Yin-Leng, and Foo, Schubert. "Depression and Psychosocial Risk Factors among Community-Dwelling Older Adults in Singapore." *J Cross Cult Gerontol*, vol. 30, 2015, pp. 409-422. doi:10.1007/s10823-015-9272-y.

Developing a Sustainable Community Care System for an Ageing Population

Seniors aged 65 and above will comprise approximately 25% of the total resident population. Given the growing ageing population, the average family eldercare is expected to increase by 41%, from 29 to 41 hours per week. This will be disproportionately borne by families with elders exhibiting five or more limitations⁷. To accommodate the rise in family- and community-based services, the Ministry of Health launched the Agency for Integrated Care in 2009 to enhance and integrate the Long-Term Care sector⁸. Juxtaposed with its aim to enhance the community-care ecosystem, the Agency seeks to increase access to care and to provide support to patients and their caregivers while it develops the primary and community care sectors.

This aligns with the “Many Helping Hands” approach that reflects the tripartite partnership of the government, community, and family in the delivery of community-based services. Apart from reducing the burden of public expenditure on the eldercare sector, there are immense intangible benefits to involve the community by means of neighbours, friends, schools, religious and ethnic institutions. The result of this synergy could be a spirit of caring and sharing as a process of community development that is immeasurable, particularly if it leads to intergenerational cohesion. The nation stands to gain in the long run.

Currently the types of community-based services available include⁹:

- **Home nursing services**, in which frail and infirm elderly people are provided with basic nursing care within their own homes. Many of the requests for nursing care arise from recently discharged hospital patients, and referrals from outpatient clinics or general practitioners.
- **Befriending services**, which involve mobilising volunteers to befriend elderly people in their

own homes as well as in institutional homes. In addition to government initiatives, a number of voluntary welfare organisations are also involved in befriending services.

- **Senior citizens’ clubs**, which meet the needs of the increasing number of elderly people at present and in the future, set up by the People’s Association, Residents’ Committee, Citizens’ Consultative Committee and voluntary organisations. About 166 senior citizens’ clubs have a combined membership of 47,600 elderly people. Most of the activities coordinated by these clubs are social, recreational, and educational in nature.
- **Day care centres**, which are established to help elderly people remain independent in the community. These centres provide a range of services, from clinical interventions to social and recreational activities.
- **Meal services**, where meals at low prices are either provided for elderly people from low-income families within the premises of an agency or delivered to their homes.

Apart from home nursing services, the other community-based services have yet to be fully developed. For example, the significant increase in the number of senior citizens’ clubs has resulted in teething problems in attracting members as well as organising appropriate programmes for them.

The same applies for day care centres, which may face difficulties customising recreational and social programmes that meet the needs of every elderly person. In addition, these day care centres are not generally convenient for elderly people who live far from the centres. However, as there is general agreement among policymakers and academics that elderly people should remain active in the community for a long as possible, more day care centres should be set up in public housing estates. This is necessary for services to be more accessible to elderly people who are mainly housed in these estates.

⁷ Chan, A. “An Overview of Singapore’s Long-Term Care System: Towards a Community Model Care.” *Coping with Rapid Population Ageing in Asia*, edited by O. Komazawa and Y. Saito, ERIA, 2021, pp. 28-35.

⁸ “About Us.” *Agency for Integrated Care*. Accessed 22 March 2023. <https://www.aic.sg/about-us>.

⁹ “Care Services.” *Agency for Integrated Care*. Accessed 22 March 2023. <https://www.aic.sg/caregiving/care-services>.

Appendix C:

	Increasing awareness of solutions	Fatigue from caring for seniors
Collaboration among organisations, government, and community groups essential to improve caregiving awareness and support	✓	✓
Mass media should actively promote alternative forms of senior care to reduce stigma and increase awareness of available resources	✓	
Empower caregivers to proactively find solutions for their parents through targeted outreach and education on the inevitability of eldercare	✓	✓

Fig. 7: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 1

	Needs of Muslim seniors not being met	Lack of understanding on being Muslim in old age	Preferences of Muslim seniors
Government support required for the establishment of Muslim-specific senior centres staffed with trained individuals to meet unique needs of Muslim seniors	✓	✓	✓
Foster cultural and religious sensitivity in senior care centres to better serve the specific needs and desires of Muslim seniors	✓	✓	
Establishment of feedback mechanism for Muslim elders		✓	✓

Fig. 8: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 2

	Feelings of responsibility to care for parents	Western conceptions of filial piety
Normalise alternative forms of care	✓	
Engage Islamic community leaders to address traditional expectations of filial piety to support modern Muslim caregivers		✓
Improve domestic helpers' caregiving skills and reduce stigma by elevating their reputation as skilled caretakers	✓	

Fig. 9: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 3

YOUTH

INTRODUCTION

The Youth Panel was convened and led by **Dr Humairah Zainal**, Exco Member of RIMA and Research Fellow at Singapore General Hospital. The rest of the panel members were:

- **Faris Ridzuan**, Master's Candidate in Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore
- **Farisha Ishak**, Singer and Youth Advocate
- **Kaven Siddique Lim**, Director of Converts Central
- **Khairul Rusydi**, Co-Founder and CEO of Reactor School

The panel members discussed key areas of concern amongst youths within our Malay/Muslim community.

After rigorous discussion and deliberation on areas of concern for further research on youths within our community, the Youth Panel had concurred on addressing two key challenges, namely:

1. Youth Leadership and Succession Planning
2. Structural Issues Affecting Youths' Mental Health

Youth leadership and succession planning are critical issues that impact the growth and sustainability of community-mediated organisations. In the context of Malay Muslim youths in Singapore, these issues take on added significance in an era where the community faces unique structural challenges that impact their mental health and well-being.

The aim of this paper is to consolidate findings from research conducted prior to and following the convention, as well as to provide policy recommendations.

¹McFarland, Daniel A., and Reuben J. Thomas. "Bowling Young: How Youth Voluntary Associations Influence Adult Political Participation." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 71, no. 3, June 2006, pp. 401-425. doi:10.1177/000312240607100303.

Youth Leadership and Succession Planning



Fig. 1: Issues related to youth leadership and succession planning

As stewards of tomorrow, youth leadership is pivotal for the progress of organisations and the larger society. In voluntary associations such as civic and political organisations¹, youth leadership paves the way for political socialisation, wherein the young can gain crucial skills that influence their potential to thrive in political participation as they reach adulthood. This is salient because taking up leadership roles in Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) paves the way for youths to achieve greater impact within society, by being more civically involved.

Based on a study by McFarland and Thomas (2006), the Panel has found that youths' involvement in voluntary associations – through community service, representation, speaking in public forums and generating a communal identity – heavily influenced their future political participation. Additionally, providing opportunities for youths to hold leadership positions in CMOs creates avenues for leadership and can become a catalyst for youths to work on other goals to improve society. Framed as such, youth leadership becomes a call to action for more young people to come together to uphold and improve social justice.

Another challenge identified by the Panel is the lack of gender representation within the management boards of CMOs. As asserted by the Dalai Lama on women's leadership in *Battling Injustice: 16 Women Nobel Peace Laureates*, "The lives of the women Nobel Peace laureates [are] clear evidence of my belief that women are naturally more sensitive to others' needs and well-being. They have greater potential for expressing love and affection. Therefore, when, as now, compassionate leadership is required, women should take on a greater role in making this world a better place."

Women have a great potential that has not been tapped into, in the context of placing them in leadership positions within the boardrooms of CMOs. Such a trend is not only disconcerting, but it constitutes a great disservice to CMOs and the maximisation of their potential.

Finally, offering leadership positions within CMOs to youths from various socioeconomic and racial backgrounds is necessary to build organisations that are representative of Singapore's diverse social fabric. Ginwright (2007) elucidates the fact that when youths participate in organising and volunteering in civic affairs, they gain opportunities to develop critical civic praxis – through engagement with ideas, social networks and experiences that build individual and collective capacity for social justice.

The concept of critical civic praxis focuses on the collective dimensions of community change, and how political awareness serves as an important community resource for youths. Such an approach repositions youths from ethnic minority groups and underprivileged backgrounds as key civic partners in community change efforts.

Structural Issues Affecting Youths' Mental Health

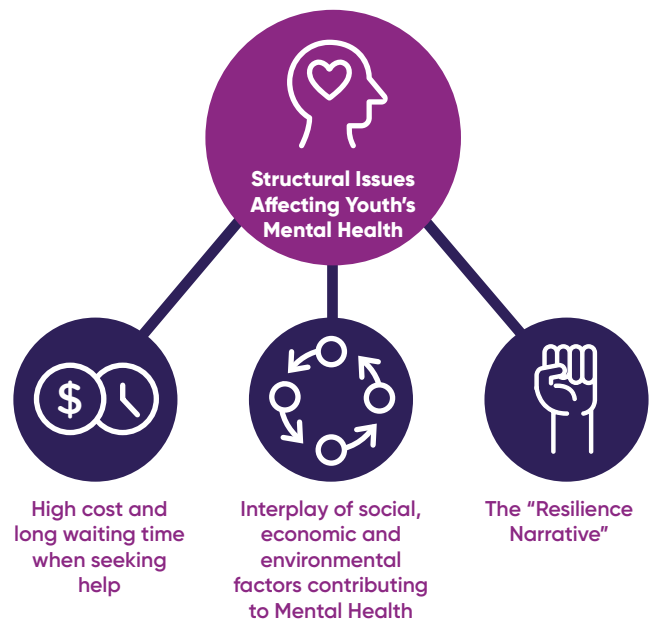


Fig. 2: Structural issues affecting youths' mental health

Despite youths' growing awareness of mental health and its importance, they continue to face challenges in obtaining such help despite the allocation of more resources to social institutions². Individuals who take the initiative to seek professional help can incur high costs and long waiting times. It can take months to get an appointment with a public-sector psychiatrist or psychologist, while doctors in the private sector are not accessible to all youths. Moreover, current available measures focus on the "resilience

²Neo, Chai Chin, et al. "More Youths Seeking Help with Mental Health - but Finding It Isn't Always Easy." *TODAY*, 1 May 2022, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/cna-insider/youth-mental-health-illness-singapore-help-treatment-2649296>.

narrative” – referring to the notion of having perseverance and self-confidence through one’s battles with mental health. However, such a take on mental health, particularly for youths, is overly simplistic and does not provide the young with any concrete assistance. Existing gaps in the current provision of mental health services will need to be addressed by multiple stakeholders.

Additionally, risk factors for mental health challenges have been found by the World Health Organization to be caused by systemic factors such as institutional racism, sexism and socioeconomic injustices³. Mental health and common mental disorders are heavily shaped by the social, economic and physical environments in which people live. Moreover, individuals from a lower socioeconomic status are more susceptible to being diagnosed with a mental illness⁴.

With the prevalence of mental disorders being well documented in Singapore, there is a considerable need to investigate further ways to provide better support for youths.

Paper Outline

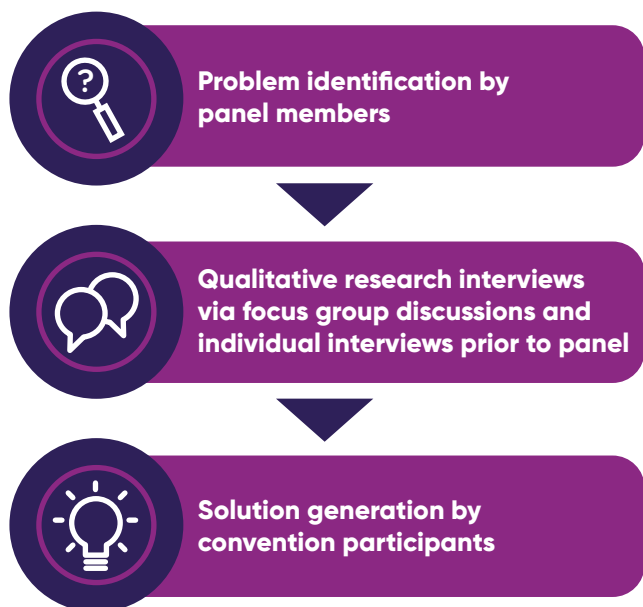


Fig. 3: Brief outline of the Youth Panel paper

The subsequent sections will outline the methodology, findings, and recommendations of each phase.

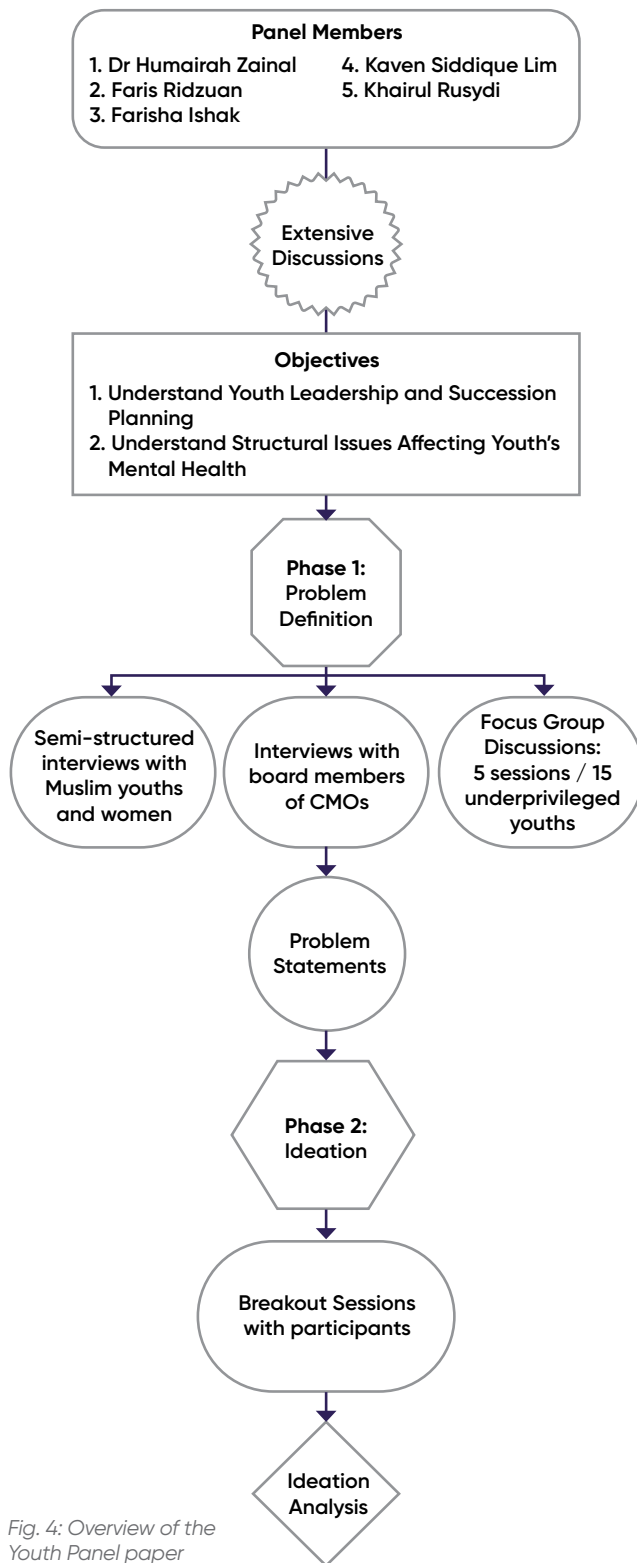


Fig. 4: Overview of the Youth Panel paper

³ World Health Organization. "Social Determinants of Mental Health." https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/112828/9789241506809_eng.pdf.

⁴ Ministry of Health, Institute of Mental Health. "COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce Report." <https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/covid-19-report/comwt-report.pdf>.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Methodology

Semi-Structured Interviews with Muslim Youths and Women

Prior to the convention, qualitative interviews were conducted through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews with Muslim youths and women in board-of-director (BOD) positions. Respondents for the FGDs were recruited through social media, and respondents for women in BOD positions in Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) were recruited via email communications. For both FGDs and individual interviews, semi-structured interviews were adopted.

Additionally, respondents were guaranteed full anonymity in sharing their responses, which were codified and stripped of any identifying information. The interviews were conducted in English. Interview data was subjected to thematic analysis to identify salient themes and patterns.

Interviews with Board Members of CMOs

To obtain a fuller picture about accountability measures for youth leadership and succession planning present within CMOs, eight individual interviews were conducted with board members of CMOs. The respondents from these interviews hailed from a myriad of CMOs and consisted of both former and current members.

Focus Group Discussion with Youths

Five FGDs were conducted with 15 underprivileged youths from a myriad of ethnic, marital, employment and educational backgrounds. The breakdown of their demographics is as follows:

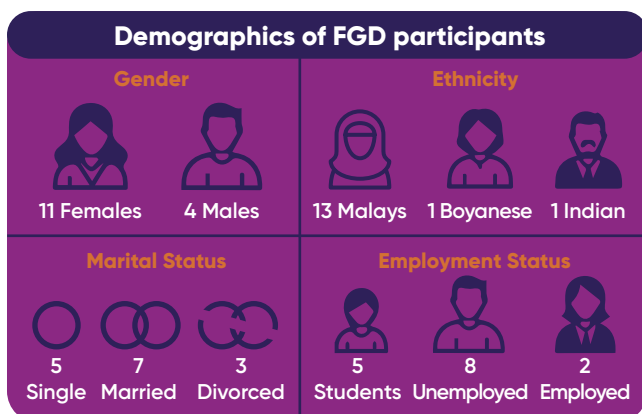


Fig. 5: Demographic information of focus group discussion participants

The respondents were also evenly categorised by their highest educational qualifications and monthly household incomes:

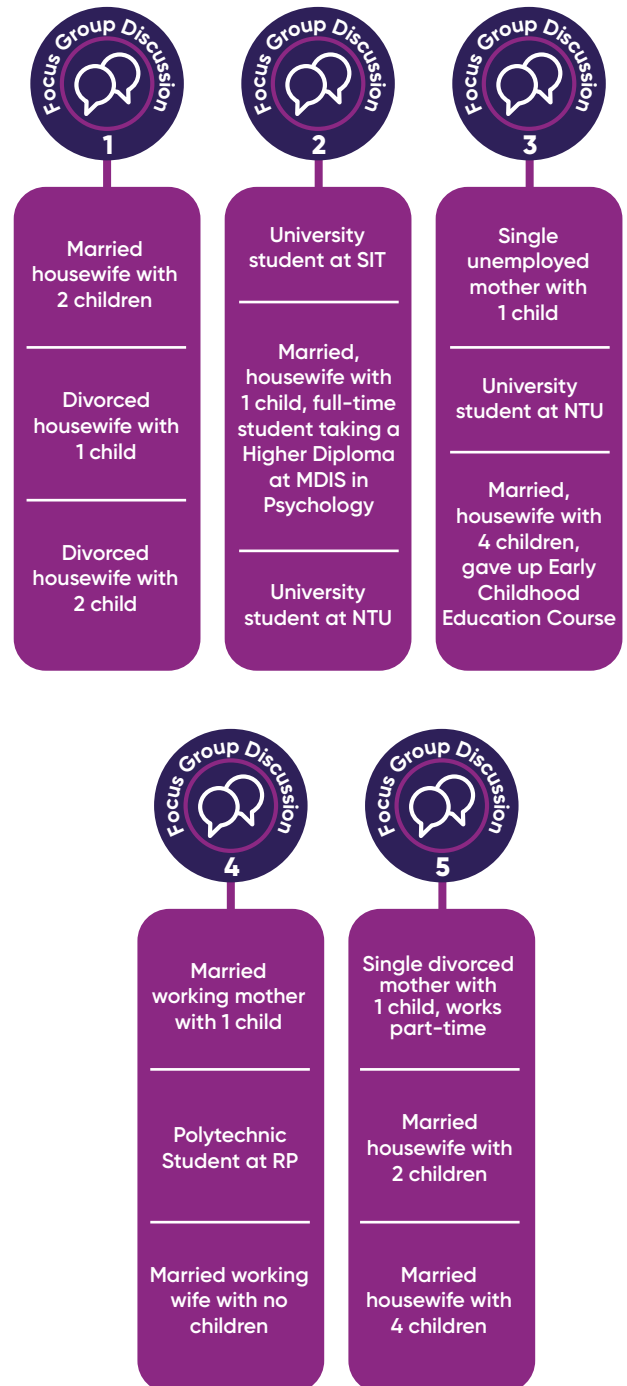


Fig. 6: Demographic information of individual focus groups

Educational Level of Respondents

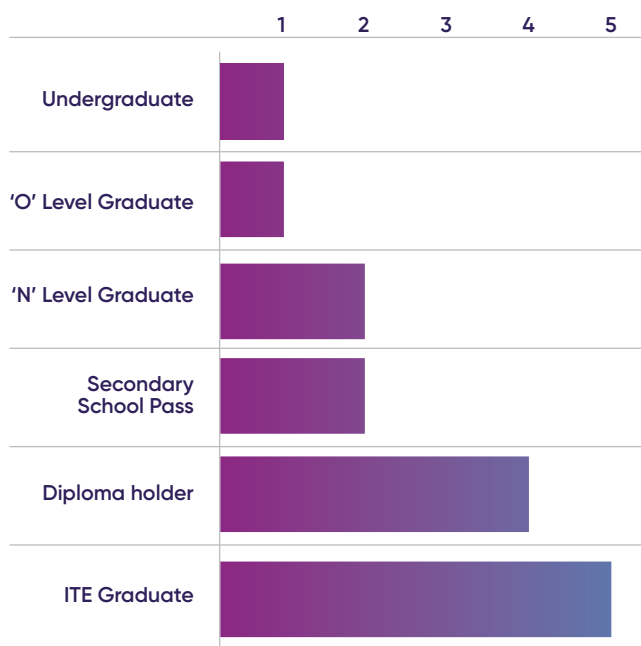


Fig. 7: Educational levels of focus group discussion participants

Monthly Household Income of Respondents

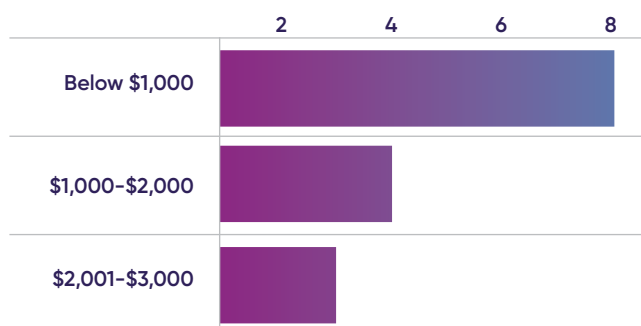


Fig. 8: Income brackets of focus group discussion participants

Key Findings

Youth Leadership and Succession Planning

This concern was investigated to shed greater light on the accountability measures on youth leadership and succession planning in Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs). Primary data for the project was collected through individual semi-structured interviews with board members of CMOs. Conversations were also conducted with the heads of youth organisations in Singapore. Secondary data was collated from scholarly publications and

published reports from the relevant ministries and social service agencies. Key findings of the primary research are as follows:

Perceived Irrelevance of Malay/Muslim Organisations (MMOs) to Muslim Youths

- Some respondents had shared that MMOs perceive themselves to be playing a role in advocacy through various programmes and initiatives.
- Many respondents, however, had shared that there is more room for MMOs to play a larger role in advocacy, as presently there is a degree of disjuncture between board-of-directors (BOD) and youths on the ground who are in touch with the real issues.
- Respondents had shared that MMOs are unable to capture the interests of the youths and are unrelatable.
- Respondents had highlighted a palpable barrier existing between BODs and youths due to BODs' reluctance to connect with youths on issues they find compelling.
- Some respondents highlighted the need to balance advocacy for causes with ensuring alignment with the State for practical considerations such as funding. However, this delicate tightrope must be treaded, as respondents had also mentioned that MMOs need to veer away from being too focused on numbers and prioritise impact instead. BOD members had also shared a necessity to cover new and emerging issues that concern the community.

Perceived Reluctance of Older Generation to Provide Opportunities to Young Leaders

- A majority of respondents had shared that they sense a great reluctance from the older generation to step aside for younger leaders.
- The lack of opportunities to reach BOD positions for younger leaders poses an uphill battle for Muslim women to secure BOD positions.
- Respondents had cited a trend in current succession planning such that senior BODs are usually replaced by older members. As a result, many young members are unable to be groomed to become BODs.

- Respondents had also shared that they did not receive adequate guidance or recognition from senior BOD members.
- Additionally, there is reluctance of senior BOD members to engage with new and alternative ideas.
- Many respondents cited organisational tendencies to align with the State due to fear of censorship or funding being cut off. However, one respondent shared she was very appreciative of the President in her organisation who was highly receptive to streamlining processes and ideas that the respondent had suggested.

Tokenistic Role of Women

- A concern voiced by many respondents was that women did not have to be elected to BOD positions, which had small quotas, but could be co-opted. As a result, many of these women occupied BOD positions merely due to technicalities in organisational constitutions.
- Respondents had also shared a desire for a shift – from organisations appearing progressive by having women in BODs for the sake of optics – to becoming progressive where women no longer occupy token designated roles. Several respondents shared potential benefits for organisations, such as preventing the organisation from being susceptible to groupthink and, most importantly, how young women could bridge communication between younger members and more senior members.
- As a result of being in largely male-dominated organisations, where women are relegated to being token members, respondents felt intensely aware of their gender with a pressure to represent the entire gender at times.
- Respondents also shared that they felt unseen in the organisation, where, due to entrenched patriarchal practices, women have not felt welcomed in joining BOD positions.
- Additionally, female respondents cited facing misogyny from members within the organisation. Many respondents noted a lack of diversity

and inclusivity in views shared within the organisation, and also cited feeling left out of decision-making due to their opinions not being taken seriously. This has led to a reluctance in speaking up.

- On the topic of inclusion, respondents cited a desire for greater diversity within BODs in terms of age, gender, and educational background, and also within the entire organisation itself where diversity is welcomed and ability is seen as important. Muslim women also spoke of the “second shift” – a concept coined by Arlie Hochschild, where Muslim women who are also board members struggle to juggle their household and childcare duties alongside their career and BOD commitments⁵.

Structural Issues Affecting Youths' Mental Health

Community effort is critical, and the research intends to examine the impacts of the Singaporean education system and other factors on youths' mental health. Primary data for the project was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with underprivileged youths. Additional online surveys were conducted with youths from Institutes of Higher Learning. Secondary data was collated from scholarly publications and published reports from the relevant ministries and social service agencies. The key findings are as follows:

Absence of Economic Capital

- For respondents, the absence of economic capital stemmed from an awareness of financial literacy but thwarted by difficulties in financial management due to circumstances. Many respondents were reliant on financial assistance, mainly through ComCare, Family Service Centres (FSCs) for families, as well as the Ministry of Education (MOE) bursary, MENDAKI, Tertiary Tuition Fee Subsidy (TTFS) and the Muslimin Trust Fund Association (MTFA) for education.
- Respondents in FGDs generally understood the importance of financial literacy. However, unforeseen circumstances may still have an adverse impact on their acquisition of economic capital.

⁵ Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Second Shift*. Penguin, 1989.

- Most respondents generally had sufficient finances for their daily expenses. Some difficulties faced by respondents in maintaining their finances were due to a myriad of challenges faced in their childhood. This included parental divorce, financial difficulties, and female respondents having to leave school to care for their siblings.
- Another impediment respondents faced was acknowledging the value of part-time work but being unable to commit to anything beyond that due to their family predicaments. This was especially so for female respondents who were mothers and who had to juggle part-time employment with childcare duties. However, these women faced great difficulty in securing social assistance due to institutions asking for them to place their children in childcare and finding full-time employment instead.
- Lack of understanding from social assistance providers was gleaned from the interviews. Women may desire to be good mothers by focusing on childcare – and this may necessitate not working or choosing to work part-time instead of full-time. Social assistance providers are perceived to not understand or appreciate this.
- Notably, there were female respondents who took charge of managing expenses for the household, a task previously associated with men. While there is an awareness of the importance of financial literacy among respondents, having to constantly deal with personal difficulty and uncertainty makes it an uphill task to accumulate adequate savings to achieve upward social mobility.
- As a result of the haunting brand that is associated with poor mental health, the stigma still exists within the community. This results in a lack of social support for respondents' mental health challenges, leading to a hesitance to seek for help.
- Many respondents who were battling with mental health issues, and were aware that they should seek help from professionals, were hesitant to do so. As a result, some respondents employed coping mechanisms by seeking social support from family and loved ones, as well as seeking religious guidance.
- For most respondents, Islam was crucial as a source of psychological capital for them, with many seeking Islamic knowledge online.

The study also found that there was a correlation between educational level and psychological capital. Respondents who had attended polytechnic or university were more likely to have a more racially and economically diverse group of friends and to rely on their social networks such as friends for emotional support. As a result of their various difficulties and challenges in securing social assistance, respondents mostly felt that their perspectives had a limited impact on policymakers. Additionally, many felt that political leaders did not understand the concerns of the people on the ground such as themselves. Only one respondent shared an interest to be involved in policy planning. Respondents had a desire for there to be more support in terms of financial assistance, for single mothers, and for there to be structural changes in how the social assistance system works.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

Based on our findings from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews, we consolidated key findings to develop problem statements to be discussed further using the Design Thinking process with participants during the convention, where participants also reflected on personas that were not discussed. The problem statements are as follows, with participants using the guiding questions as a tool to brainstorm during the ideation exercise of the convention:

Lack of Psychological Capital

Many of the respondents' parents themselves have had or are having challenges with their mental health issues. Many respondents have experienced traumatic events in their own lives growing up, and they continue to struggle with financial difficulties. Notably for female respondents, they cited the pressure to be considered a good mother to their children as a source of stress. An additional impediment for respondents to seek help was posed by the stigma surrounding mental health:



Youth Leadership and Succession Planning

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

1

Resistance from older board members to provide learning opportunities to younger members, especially women. This stems from structural barriers such as patriarchal beliefs and androcentrism that exist within CMOs. Traditional perceptions remain on the role of women in BOD positions, causing it to remain a challenge for women to assume these positions.

2

The lack of diversity in terms of recruiting youths from different educational backgrounds is a perceived barrier for women to take up BOD positions in CMOs. Additionally, the inability for CMOs to capture the interests of youths has led to a disjuncture between BODs and youths.

Guiding Questions During Ideation

How can we ensure greater diversity and inclusion in the leadership structures of Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) for maximum impact on society?

How can we minimise the barriers to Board appointments for youths? For young Muslim women?

How can CMOs encourage youths of diverse backgrounds to aspire towards contributing more actively through leadership positions in the future?



Structural Issues Affecting Youths' Mental Health

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

1

Structural issues such as intergenerational poverty, housing, family issues, as well as lack of support from stakeholders such as CMOs and schools in which youths seek financial assistance while making the best of their circumstances, impede youths from achieving social mobility.

2

Generational mental health issues, turbulence within personal lives and constant financial stress experienced by youths contribute to their difficulties with mental health. While aware of the importance of good mental health and of the avenues to seek help, youths remain reluctant to seek help from professionals for their struggles due to the stigma attached to mental health issues.

Guiding Questions During Ideation

What can different stakeholders do to provide better support for youths who are facing mental health challenges?

- a. Government
- b. Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs)
- c. Schools

Participants were provided with guiding questions to facilitate the Design Thinking process to brainstorm about profiles that had not been discussed during the convention. These were the guiding questions:

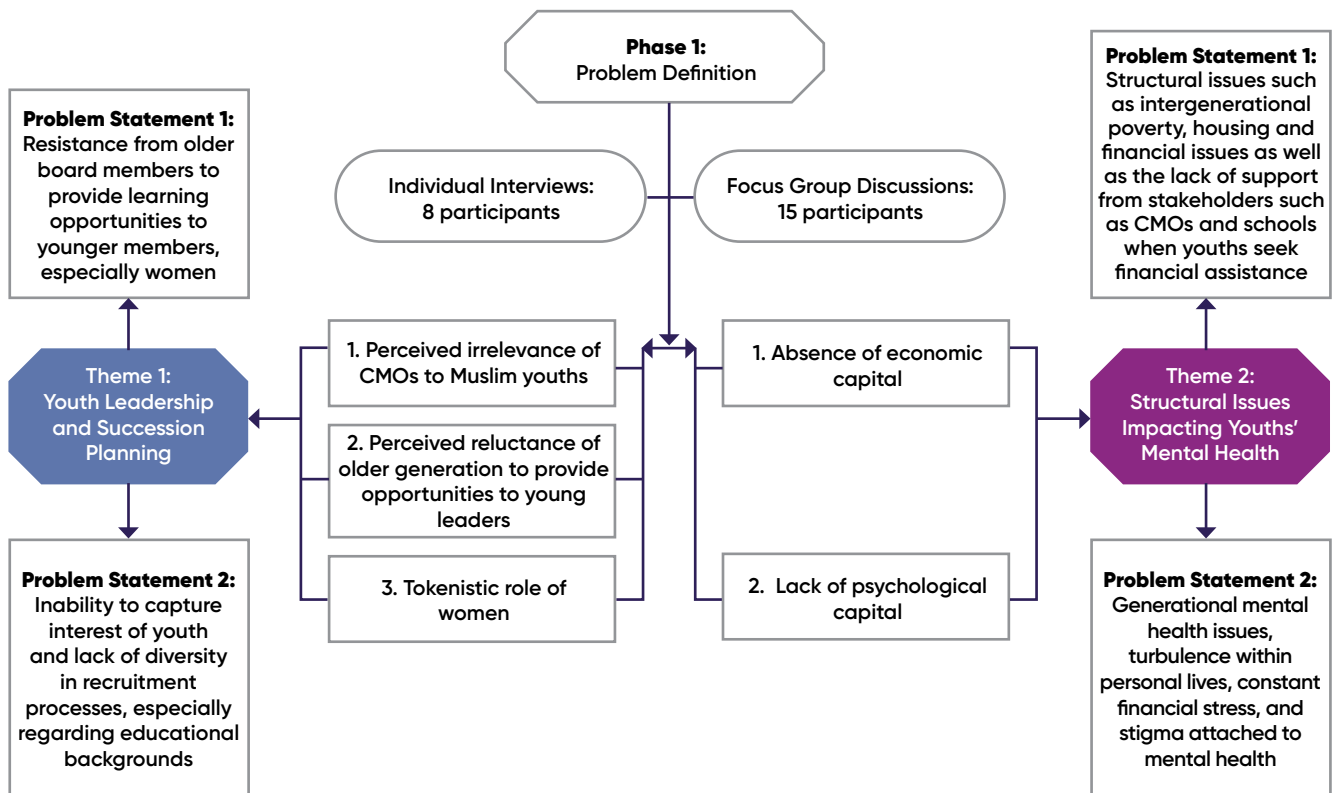


Fig. 9: Overview of ideation phase for the Youth Panel Paper

IDEATION

In order to improve service to youths within the Malay/Muslim community, ideation breakout sessions were convened on the day of the convention. These ideation breakout sessions were intended to encourage participants to share their perspectives and to ensure engagement from participants. There were a total of 78 participants and 15 breakout groups, with seven groups for Youth Leadership and Succession Planning as well as eight groups for Structural Issues Affecting Youth Mental Health.

During the group breakout sessions, participants discussed the problem statements with the guiding questions to assist them and brainstormed further using the Design Thinking Process:

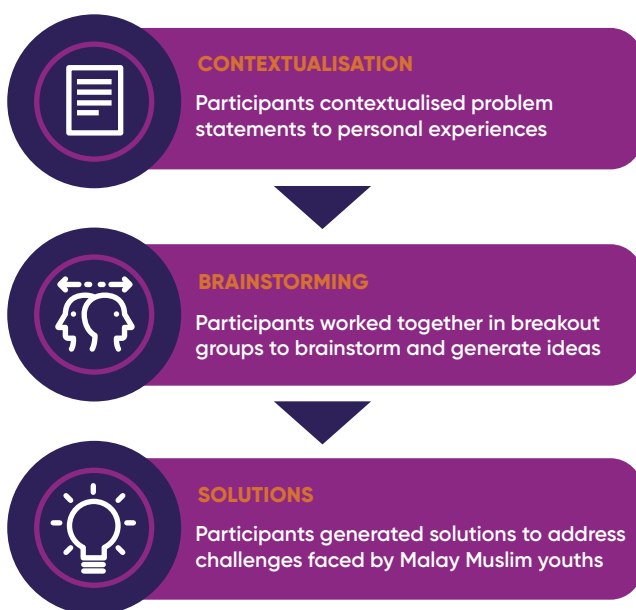


Fig. 10: Ideation process for the Youth Panel Paper

Youth Leadership and Succession Planning

1. How can we ensure greater diversity and inclusion in the leadership structures of Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) for maximum impact on society?

Participants felt that more could be done to increase transparency pertaining to entering the leadership structures. Many participants had shared that there were not many resources available for prospective

volunteers to understand the leadership structures within CMOs, which led to a lack of clarity and understanding. Participants also shared anecdotes leading to a common belief that it was an uphill task for youths to participate in leadership positions within CMOs due to resistance from older members. Overall, participants believed that it was salient for youths to have access to resources and avenues where they are able to volunteer and take on leadership roles. Participants shared that the lack of awareness and information for youths to do so can limit the potential of CMOs to be dynamic, vibrant and representative of today's Malay/Muslim community.

IDEATION ANALYSIS

It is recommended that CMOs enhance transparency and clarity by learning from corporate world practices. This will enable them to establish clear leadership structures and succession planning programmes.

CMOs should institutionalise their leadership structures and adopt corporate ladder methods. By doing so, individuals can work their way up to leadership positions and contribute to the organisation's success.

To implement this approach, it is recommended to create a professional career path that allows volunteers to ascend from volunteer roles to leadership positions within the organisation. This will incentivise volunteers to work towards becoming leaders and contribute to the organisation's growth.

The creation of a clear succession planning programme is crucial for CMOs. Older members with leadership positions should guide and train younger and capable youths who show potential, making it mandatory to ensure maximum impact on society.

Volunteers should be given opportunities to shadow executive committee members from youth organisations. This will provide valuable learning experiences for the volunteers and enable them to learn from experienced leaders.

By implementing the above recommendations, CMOs can create a strong leadership structure, ensure a smooth transition of leadership for the future, and ultimately achieve their goals.

2. How can we minimise the barriers to Board appointment for youths, especially for young Muslim women?

Redefining criteria for Board appointment to be beyond academic achievements is key in minimising the barriers to Board appointments for youths, especially young Muslim women. The mentoring of junior board members by older board members would provide a platform for youths to gain hands-on experience prior to taking up leadership positions. Putting into the constitution for there to be women on the Board is a concerted effort to recognise the role of Muslim women in the community. Additionally, more effective outreach efforts through social media, networking events; and encouraging youths and women to be more vocal in order to nurture a culture of speaking up and openly sharing ideas; are essential to making Board appointment more accessible to young Muslim women.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

To ensure that young Muslim women have access to Board appointments, it is recommended to take several important steps to promote diversity and inclusivity in the selection process.

Expanding the criteria for Board appointments beyond academic achievements is crucial to ensure that a diverse range of candidates is considered. This will increase the chances of young Muslim women being appointed to the Board, and create a more inclusive environment.

Providing mentorship opportunities for junior board members is also essential to support their development and enable them to navigate their roles successfully. Pairing junior board members with more experienced mentors can offer guidance and support, and help youths develop their leadership skills.

To ensure that women are included on the Board, it is crucial to have a clear commitment to gender diversity written into the organisation's constitution. This will send a clear message that the organisation values diversity and it is committed to creating a more inclusive environment.

Increasing outreach efforts to encourage open sharing of ideas and diverse perspectives is another important step. Using social media, networking events, and other avenues to reach a wider audience can promote the importance of having a diverse range of perspectives on the Board, thereby attracting a more diverse range of candidates.

By following these recommendations, CMOs can create a more inclusive and equitable management board that provides opportunities for young Muslim women to take on leadership roles and contribute to the organisation's success. This will not only benefit the organisation but also help promote diversity and inclusivity in the wider Muslim community.

3. How can we encourage youths of diverse backgrounds to aspire towards contributing more actively through leadership positions in CMOs?

Participants had shared that they understood the crucial role CMOs play to foster a conducive environment for youth leadership roles and for youths to thrive, regardless of socioeconomic status or academic background. As a result, participants had shared that there needs to be a reconceptualisation of criterion for youth leaders so that it focuses on the individual's contribution to the community. Additionally, participants had suggested that outreach efforts be widened to identify prospective youth leaders. Many participants had also shared concerns about the lack of clarity pertaining to the leadership track for youths.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

To create a more inclusive and diverse environment for young people to take on leadership roles, it is recommended to implement the following measures:

Redefine success to focus on how individuals can contribute to the community rather than centring solely on academic or wealth status. This shift in perspective can encourage young people from diverse backgrounds to aspire towards leadership roles and feel valued within the community.

Utilise marketing efforts such as youth camps and social activism dialogues to identify potential youth leaders. These initiatives can provide a platform for young people to engage with their community, demonstrate their leadership potential, and create opportunities for them to take on leadership roles.

Establish a clear leadership track for youths to develop themselves within the organisations they are working with. This will make the process more transparent and provide young people with a clear understanding of what they need to do to progress into leadership roles.

By implementing these measures, CMOs can create a more inclusive and diverse environment for young people to take on leadership positions. This will ensure that the organisation is representative of the community it serves, where young people from all backgrounds have an opportunity to contribute to its success.

Structural Factors Impacting Youths' Mental Health

What can different stakeholders do to provide better support for youths who are facing mental health challenges?

A. GOVERNMENT

Participants felt that with high costs incurred from seeking help for mental health, more could be done in terms of resources for the public to receive grants to offset financial barriers. There was great emphasis from all participants that there needs to be a transformation in the narrative pertaining to seeking help for mental health, particularly the "resilience narrative" where individuals are told they should just strengthen their "determination" to overcome mental health challenges. To achieve this, participants had suggested that the Government play a more active role by having a coherent voice that reinforces measures to combat mental health challenges.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

To increase awareness and education around mental health issues in the workplace, it is recommended to:

Develop a workplace mental health policy that outlines the organisation's commitment to supporting employee mental health and well-being. This policy should include provisions for mental health accommodations, resources for employees to access mental health services, and guidelines for addressing mental health issues in the workplace.

Provide mental health training to all employees, including managers and supervisors, to increase awareness and understanding of mental health issues, reduce stigma, and provide strategies to support colleagues with mental health challenges.

Establish an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to provide confidential counselling and support services to employees who may be experiencing mental health issues. This programme should be widely promoted and easily accessible to all employees.

Implement regular mental health check-ins and surveys to assess employee mental health and well-being, identify potential areas for improvement, and evaluate the effectiveness of mental health programmes and initiatives.

Foster a culture of open communication and support around mental health issues, including providing opportunities for employees to share their experiences and ideas for improving mental health support in the workplace.

By implementing these measures, organisations can create a supportive and inclusive workplace culture that prioritises employee mental health and well-being. This can lead to improved employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention, and ultimately benefit the overall success of the organisation.

B. COMMUNITY AND MUSLIM ORGANISATIONS

Participants noted that Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) play an integral role in the structural challenges faced by Malay Muslim youths pertaining to their mental health. They had raised concerns about the use of resilience and religion as sole remedies to mental health challenges without adequate touchpoints for youths to confide about their difficulties.

Participants had suggested the role AMP can play to facilitate this and bridge the gap between Malay Muslim youths and their mental health difficulties. There needs to be better understanding of the intersectionality of identities for Malay Muslim youths. Being both Muslim and Singaporean, there is a strong stigma pertaining to mental health and seeking help. Additionally, participants noted that a key challenge likely to be faced by Malay Muslim youths today is career choices and how to go about applying for their careers.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

To improve and expand support for the mental health of our Malay Muslim youths, it is recommended to:

Develop a more holistic approach to address mental health challenges in the Muslim community by integrating resilience and religion.

Utilise touchpoints within the community – such as mosques – to foster better understanding and acceptance of mental health issues.



IDEATION ANALYSIS

Participants had suggested the following to address how schools can step up to aid students in their mental health:

One of the key points was the importance of ensuring that all schools provide identical resources for mental health support to their students. The participants agreed that this is essential for creating an equitable learning environment where every student has access to the same level of care and support.

Another topic that was brought up was the need for financial literacy education to be included in school programmes. The participants discussed the importance of teaching students basic financial skills to help them better manage their money as they grow older. They emphasised that this would be a valuable life skill that could help students make informed decisions and manage financial difficulties in the future.

The participants also discussed the role of family service centres and teaching staff in mediating parent-child relationships. They recognised that strong family relationships are crucial for a child's mental health and well-being, and suggested that greater collaboration between schools and family service centres can help facilitate this. They emphasised the importance of working together to support families in a respectful and collaborative way.

Launch an "I'm Okay Not to Be Okay" campaign to facilitate a safe platform for youths to discuss their problems with other like-minded young people.

Provide career advisers to guide youths of working age in applying for jobs.

Create more inclusive support systems that reconcile Islam and mental health, recognising the intersectionality of identities and addressing the stigma that exists within the Muslim community in seeking counselling.

C. SCHOOLS

Participants had discussed several important topics related to student well-being. One of the key points was the importance of ensuring that all schools provide identical resources for mental health support to their students. The group agreed that this is essential for creating an equitable learning environment where every student has access to the same level of care and support.

Participants also discussed the need for financial literacy to be included in school programmes as a valuable life skill that could help students make informed decisions and avoid financial difficulties in the future. Participants recognised that strong family relationships are crucial for a child's mental health and well-being, and suggested that greater collaboration between schools and family service centres could help facilitate this.

Finally, participants brought up the importance of creating greater awareness of mental health issues and normalising conversations about seeking help.

Finally, the participants talked about the importance of building greater awareness of mental health issues and normalising conversations about seeking help. They acknowledged that there is still a stigma attached to mental health issues, and that many students may be hesitant to seek help.

The participants discussed ways to encourage students to open up and seek support when needed, such as by creating a safe and welcoming environment as well as providing resources and support for those who need it.

CONCLUSION

As part of the AMP 4th National Convention, the Youth Panel was convened to further investigate Youth Leadership and Succession Planning within Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs) and Structural Issues Impacting Youths' Mental Health. To prioritise the voices and experiences of youths interviewed, data collection and analysis were qualitative in nature. Following the analysis of interview findings, four problem statements were generated for the Youth Panel. These problem statements were then used for ideation as part of the Design Thinking process by 78 participants at the convention.

Theme 1: Youth Leadership and Succession Planning

1. Due to structural barriers such as patriarchal beliefs and androcentrism within CMOs, there is resistance from older board members to provide younger generation members, especially women, with opportunities to learn. There remains a traditional perception of the role of women in board-of-director (BOD) positions within CMOs, causing for it to be an uphill task for women to take up these positions.
 - Participants' recommendations for CMOs to adopt leadership ascension protocols similar to those of the corporate world and for there to be shadowing between older and younger board members were the two main ideations that targeted these issues. See Appendix B for further details.
2. Lack of diversity in terms of recruiting youths from different educational backgrounds is a perceived barrier for women to sit in BOD positions in CMOs. Additionally, the inability of CMOs to capture the interests of youths has led to a disjuncture between BODs and youths.
 - Participants' recommendations for CMOs to expand their definitions of success to qualify for board membership and having a clearer commitment to gender diversity within the constitution were the two main ideations that targeted these issues. See Appendix C for further details.

Theme 2: Structural Issues Impacting Youths' Mental Health

3. Structural issues such as intergenerational poverty, housing and family issues, as well as the lack of support from stakeholders such as CMOs and schools when youths seek financial assistance (while making the best of their circumstances) remain as impediments for youths to achieve social mobility.
 - Participants' recommendations for the fostering of a culture of open communication and support around mental health issues given the stigma and development of a workplace mental health policy outlining organisations' commitment to supporting employee mental health and well-being were two main ideations that addressed these issues. See Appendix D for further details.
4. Generational mental health issues, turbulence within personal lives, and constant financial stress experienced by youths contribute to their difficulties with mental health. While aware of mental health and avenues to seek help, youths remain reluctant to seek help from professionals for their struggles due to the stigma attached to mental health issues.

- Participants' recommendations for there to be a more holistic approach to address mental health challenges within the Muslim community by integrating resilience and religion as well as launching an "I'm Okay Not to Be Okay" campaign to break down the stigma were two main ideations that addressed these issues. See Appendix E for further details.

The various solutions generated serve as great starting points for how the Government, CMOs, policymakers and fellow Malay/Muslims can work together to improve the lives of our youths in Singapore.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Literature Review

Muslim Leadership in Singapore

When the pandemic momentarily brought the entire world to a standstill, it has also catalysed a greater awareness of existing fissures within our community, namely the leadership within our community. In the context of Singapore's multi-racial and multi-religious fabric, a core aspect of the 'Malay plight' has been argued to be the legitimacy of Malay political leadership in Singapore, with both the ruling-party-affiliated Malay politicians and their Malay opposition counterparts being diametrically opposing in terms of their perceptions and predispositions towards this particular issue⁶. Notably, the latter views much of the source of the Malay grievance to be inadequate success of the Government and Malay MPs in fulfilling Malay aspirations as an ethnic minority in Singapore, further arguing that PAP Malay MPs, chosen and co-opted by the state to represent Malays, have not delivered what they had promised to.

In light of this, a bold, albeit controversial, alternative model of leadership known as 'collective leadership', was publicly put forth by AMP in both their 1990 and 2000 National Conventions. Under this form of leadership, for their credibility, Malay/Muslim Organisations (MMOs) must not be led by politicians. Instead, MMOs must be 'non-partisan' and 'independent,' and a collaborative and consultative Council comprising politicians (from both sides) and non-political leaders should be established to deliberate on major issues affecting the community and find common ground. In his article, Mutalib argues for this model, believing that this alternative or its variant could mitigate, if not resolve, the long-standing Malay plight, thus benefiting the community and Singapore as a whole. Though this concept of

'collective leadership' has since been dismissed, the principles of this alternative leadership are arguably still relevant today⁷.

Building on this, in Mutalib's *Being Ethnic Minority and Muslim in a Global City-State*, he analyses the predicaments faced by Muslims in Singapore in the realms of politics, education, social mobility, economy and freedom of religious expression⁸. On the issue of Muslim leadership in Singapore, he highlights the problem of Malay leadership legitimacy, namely in terms of inadequate educational and religious credentials, and ineffective leadership. He also writes about the impediments to effective Malay leadership, namely the GRC electoral system and orientation of Muslim organisations and institutions. The latter, in particular, are often headed by people closely allied to the Government, some of whom are PAP party cadres. Like many pro-establishment agencies elsewhere, leaders of MMOs are often seen as not being bold enough to relay accurate feedback to the Government. As a result, Malay leadership has long been regarded by Malays to be ineffective in safeguarding their interests and aspirations. Taking all this into consideration, evidently more needs to be done to develop Muslim leadership talent so as to improve its leadership legitimacy (Hussin Mutalib, 2014). Notably, Mutalib raised two pivotal areas that have received little attention in discussions about Singapore's Malay dilemma – namely, countless Malay public seminars and conventions calling for attention to their plight, and the Government's similarly persistent resistance to such calls, seen as inimical to national interest.

Majulah!: 50 years of Malay/Muslim Community in Singapore highlights three broad principles that have guided Muslim community leaders in ensuring that the interests of religion, race and our country are in harmony⁹. They are, namely, practising Islam in a way that preaches moderation and respects culture,

⁶ Mutalib, Hussin. "The Quest for Leadership Legitimacy among Singapore Malays." *Asian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 20, no. 1, 30 May 2012, pp. 70-85.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Mutalib, Hussin. *Singapore Malays: Being Ethnic Minority and Muslim in a Global City-State*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2014.

⁹ Rasheed, Zainul Abidin, and Norshahril Saat. *Majulah!: 50 Years of Malay/Muslim Community in Singapore*. World Scientific Books, 2016.

heritage and context; preserving a Malay culture that exemplifies Islamic values and joining fellow citizens to build a society that values meritocracy, self-reliance and integrity; and living respectfully with others in a multi-religious, multi-racial society.

Walid Jumblatt Abdullah has investigated the nature of secularism as practised by the Singapore state: focusing on the two main Islamic organisations, MUIS and Pergas, he argues the state uses 'muscular' and 'calibrated' secularism to manage them¹⁰. While 'muscular secularism' refers to a direct, interventionist approach characterised by draconian measures, harsh laws, and formal co-optation, 'calibrated secularism' is a more indirect form of intervention consisting of symbiotic relationships between religious organisations and the state, known as informal co-optation. Though *asatizah* (religious teachers and/or scholars) have been referred to as being apolitical; not visibly active in politics; portrayed as being controlled by the Government; and their actions merely an extension of Government policies concerning the local Muslim community – Mostarom argues that this leadership community employs carefully considered pragmatism in its dealings with state authorities, with the broader objective of preserving the interests of the local Muslim community¹¹. This includes *asatizah*-led initiatives to facilitate harmonious coexistence with the vibrant cultural and religious diversity present in Singapore, which is often viewed as merely an extension of state interest.

While there is extensive literature on Muslim leadership in Singapore, it is overwhelmingly male-dominated, wherein it does not showcase the diversity and inclusion structures within Community and Muslim Organisations (CMOs), and how this may have an impact on youths, especially women

who now hold board-of-director (BOD) positions within these organisations.

Health Challenges in Singapore

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting stressors have also taken a serious toll on the mental health of Muslim youths in Singapore, but also youths at large¹². In a series of polls conducted by the National Youth Council between April and December 2020 on Singaporean youths' challenges and sentiments on COVID-19, mental well-being remained a challenge for 52% of respondents¹³. The top stressors cited by youths were anxiety over the future, stress over finances, and worries about academic or work performance. With the pandemic, schools and Institutes of Higher Learning invested efforts to train staff to identify signs of distress in students and to refer students to professionally trained counsellors. With a rapidly increasing trend of youths being diagnosed with depression, however, schools have yet to adequately aid the improvement of students' mental health¹⁴. While mental health features prominently in MOE's revised Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum, the emphasis disconcertingly remains on building mental resilience rather than acknowledging that struggling with mental health is something all individuals are susceptible to. This is a great cause for concern, what with the highly competitive Singaporean education system.

The solutions to promote mental well-being, as proposed by the *asatizah*, would often involve increasing one's spirituality through acts of piety that bring one closer to God, such as performing one's prayers and reading the Quran. However, often neglected are the oppressive forces in society, such as institutional racism, sexism and class injustices that may also contribute to the individual's mental health condition.

¹⁰ Abdullah, Walid Jumblatt. "Religious Representation in Secular Singapore: A Case Study of MUIS and Pergas." *Asian Survey*, vol. 53, no. 6, December 2013, pp. 1182-1204. University of California Press.

¹¹ Mostarom, Tuty Raihanah. "Muslim Religious Leaders and the Promotion of Harmonious Coexistence in Singapore: Government Project or Community Initiative?" In *Islam and Peacebuilding in the Asia-Pacific*, edited by Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, World Scientific Books, 2017, pp. 213-241.

¹² Ministry of Health, Institute of Mental Health. "COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce Report." <https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/covid-19-report/comwt-report.pdf>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Neo, Chai Chin, et al. "More Youths Seeking Help with Mental Health - but Finding It Isn't Always Easy." *TODAY*, 1 May 2022, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/cna-insider/youth-mental-health-illness-singapore-help-treatment-2649296>.

The online talks and podcasts organised by young local *asatizah* on social media illustrate this point. Most of these talks are largely focused on the rhetoric of self-help as necessary solutions to societal problems. In a keynote address at the MENDAKI Symposium on 30 June 2022, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies Tharman Shanmugaratnam underscored how education has been and is one of Singapore's most fundamental social and economic strategy – especially now as we look to the future. Education is how we develop the social attributes we need to be a vibrant and cohesive society. It is how we develop the skills that we need to be a competitive economy. But more than just specific social or economic skills and capabilities, education is how we shape the character of our nation. It has been so, and remains fundamental to the character of the future Singapore¹⁵.

Acknowledging gaps in the Malay community in education, Senior Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam noted the great leaps by Malay students, citing how 15-year-old Malay students in the 2018 PISA tests outperformed the average

of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries¹⁶. Improvements within the Malay community in attaining post-secondary qualifications and beyond have also been the largest in the last decade compared to that of other ethnic groups, with very significant progress. However, gaps remain. The gaps are evident in every educational level. The gaps faced by the Malay community exist not only because Malays have been overrepresented in lower socioeconomic groups but also because there is a greater proportion of Malays who start off weak in school, and remain weak¹⁷. However, no studies have been conducted on challenges that youths from various socioeconomic groups face with mental health, despite research showing that individuals from lower socioeconomic levels are more likely to be diagnosed with a mental illness¹⁸.

Given the gaps identified in the literature, these are salient areas of concern that need to be delved deeper into, to understand emerging trends within our community and how to provide better support for youths.

¹⁵ "Keynote Address by SM Tharman Shanmugaratnam at the Mendaki Symposium 2022." *Prime Minister's Office Singapore, Newsroom*, 30 June 2022, <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/Keynote-Address-by-SM-Tharman-Shanmugaratnam-at-the-Mendaki-Symposium-2022>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Vaingankar, Janhavi Ajit, et al. "Understanding the Relationships between Mental Disorders, Self-Reported Health Outcomes and Positive Mental Health: Findings from a National Survey." *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, vol. 18, no. 1, 4 March 2020, p. 55. doi:10.1186/s12955-020-01308-0.

Appendix B:

Theme 1: Youth Leadership and Succession Planning: Guiding Question 1

Due to structural barriers such as patriarchal beliefs and androcentrism within CMOs, there is resistance from older board members to provide younger generation members, especially women, with opportunities to learn. As such, how can we ensure greater diversity and inclusion in the leadership structures of CMOs for maximum impact on society?

	Lack of transparency pertaining to entering the leadership structures	Resistance from older members	Lack of awareness and information of youths
Enhance transparency and clarity by learning from corporate world practice	✓		
Institutionalise their leadership structures and adopt corporate ladder methods	✓	✓	
Create a professional career path	✓		
Clear succession planning programme	✓		✓
Shadow executive committee members		✓	✓

Fig. 11: Solutions addressing Guiding Question 1 of Theme 1: Youth Leadership and Succession Planning

Appendix C:

Theme 1: Youth Leadership and Succession Planning: Guiding Questions 2 and 3

Lack of diversity in terms of recruiting youths from different educational backgrounds is a perceived barrier for women to sit in BOD positions in CMOs. Additionally, the inability for CMOs to capture the interests of youths has led to a disjuncture between BODs and youths. As such, how can we minimise the barriers to Board appointments for youths, and especially for young Muslim women?

	Lack of mentoring	Lack of concerted effort to recognise role of Muslim women in the community	Lack of effective outreach methods
Expanding the criteria for Board appointments beyond academic achievements		✓	
Mentorship opportunities	✓		
Clear commitment to gender diversity written into the organisation's constitution		✓	
Social media outreach efforts and networking events			✓

Fig. 12: Solutions addressing Guiding Question 2 of Theme 1: Youth Leadership and Succession Planning

Similarly, how can CMOs encourage youths of diverse backgrounds to aspire towards contributing more actively through leadership positions in the future?

	Lack of diversity (with regard to socio-economic status or academic background)	Strict criterion evaluating an individual's contribution to the community	Lack of outreach methods to identify perspective youth leaders	Lack of clarity pertaining to leadership tracks
Redefinition of success for youths	✓	✓	✓	
Marketing efforts such as youth camps and social activism dialogues			✓	✓
Clear leadership track for youths				✓

Fig. 13: Solutions addressing Guiding Question 3 of Theme 1: Youth Leadership and Succession Planning

Appendix D:

Theme 2: Structural Issues Impacting Youths' Mental Health

Structural issues such as intergenerational poverty, housing and family issues, as well as the lack of support from stakeholders such as CMOs and schools when youths seek financial assistance (while making the best of their circumstances) remain as impediments for youths to achieve social mobility. What can the Government do to provide better support for youths who are facing mental health challenges?

	Lack of resources to defray high costs of seeking mental health services	Problematic narrative pertaining to seeking help for mental health	Focus on "resilience"
Develop a workplace mental health policy that outlines the organisation's commitment to supporting employee mental health and wellbeing		✓	✓
Provide mental health training to all employees		✓	✓
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to provide confidential counseling and support services	✓		
Implement regular mental health check-ins and surveys		✓	✓
Foster a culture of open communication and support around mental health issues		✓	✓

Fig. 14: Proposed solutions related to Theme 2: Structural Issues Impacting Youths' Mental Health for the Government

Appendix E:

Theme 2: Structural Issues Impacting Youths' Mental Health

Generational mental health issues, turbulence within personal lives and constant financial stress experienced by youths contribute to their difficulties with mental health. While aware of mental health and avenues to seek help, youths remain reluctant to seek help from professionals for their struggles due to the stigma attached to mental health. What can CMOs do to provide better support for youths who are facing mental health challenges?

	Use resilience and religion as sole reminders to mental health	Lack of understanding of the intersectionality of identities for Malay Muslim youths	Stigma pertaining to mental health and seeking help	Career choices and applying for their careers
Develop a more holistic approach to address mental health challenges in the Muslim community by integrating resilience and religion	✓	✓	✓	
Utilise touchpoints within the community, such as mosques			✓	
Launch an 'I'm Okay Not To Be Okay' campaign	✓	✓	✓	
Provide career adviser				✓
Create more inclusive support systems that reconcile Islam and mental health	✓	✓	✓	

Fig. 15: Proposed solutions related to Theme 2: Structural Issues Impacting Youths' Mental Health for Community and Muslim Organisations

Similarly, what steps can schools take to address such issues?

	Unequal resources	Lack of financial literacy classes	Lack of strong family relationships	Lack of awareness of mental health issues and stigma on seeking help
Provide identical resources for mental health support to their students	✓			
Financial literacy to be included in school programmes		✓		
Greater collaboration between schools and family services centres			✓	
Building greater awareness of mental health issues and normalising conversations about seeking help				✓

Fig. 16: Proposed solutions related to Theme 2: Structural Issues Impacting Youths' Mental Health for Schools

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