



Madani Society's insights on prophetic communication for enhancing social well-being: Events from the Madinah era

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the powerful role of prophetic communication during the Madinah era and its continued relevance in promoting social well-being today. Focusing on the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Medina, particularly through the guiding principles of the Medina Charter, the study reveals how prophetic communication can foster harmony among diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic groups. Rooted in values like tolerance, justice, and mutual respect, prophetic communication offers a timeless framework for building united, thriving communities. Through a qualitative approach, this research examines how the Madani Society, with its emphasis on equality, benevolence, and social cohesion, provides valuable lessons for contemporary society. By analysing historical texts and scholarly perspectives, the paper underscores the importance of prophetic communication in nurturing peaceful coexistence and addressing the challenges of multicultural societies. Ultimately, it offers a roadmap for applying the prophetic model to enhance social stability and collective prosperity in today's world.

Keywords: *Madinah era, Madani Society, Prophet Muhammad SAW, prophetic-communication, social well-being*

INTRODUCTION

Religious, racial, and national diversity forms the essence of human existence on Earth. To thrive amidst this variety, a harmonious approach is essential for fostering coexistence. As defined by Kamus Dewan (2002), harmony reflects agreement and compatibility, transcending backgrounds and touching all aspects of life. By embracing harmony, societies can cultivate enduring peace and security. Mabruk (2015) highlighted that in today's diverse world of religious beliefs, ideologies, and intellectual orientations, societal stability depends on citizens' willingness to coexist peacefully. Fundamental principles like equality, justice, religious freedom, tolerance, and economic security are vital for fostering social cohesion and governance (Al-Gharyani, 2006).

Communication serves as a cornerstone for sharing knowledge, building understanding, and fostering collaboration (Sicilia & Palazon, 2023). Within the framework of Islam, communication rooted in prophetic values is key to nurturing inclusive and harmonious societies. The concept of Madani Society, inspired by the leadership of Prophet Muhammad SAW in Medina, exemplifies the unifying power of communication across diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic groups. The Medina Charter, a pivotal document from that era, outlined principles of tolerance, justice, and mutual respect, promoting social well-being. This study delves into the role of prophetic communication during the Medina era to explore its relevance in modern society, offering insights into strengthening social integration and collective prosperity today.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper analyses three interrelated elements: Concept of Madani Society, Prophetic Communication, and Social Well-being.

Concept of Madani Society

The concept of "Madani Society" has gained increasing attention in recent discussions, reflecting its rich significance in Islamic tradition and contemporary discourse. Derived from the Arabic word *Madani*, meaning civil or civilised, this term refers to a society that values human dignity, promotes freedom, democracy, and civility, and upholds shared legal norms (Asrori, 2016). A Madani Society is characterised by voluntary cooperation and independence in its relationship with the state, making it an aspirational model for an ideal community.

Historically, the term traces back to the Islamic society established by Prophet Muhammad in Medina. This community, rooted in the Medina Charter, sought to build a civilisation grounded in Islamic ideals and devotion to Allah. The Charter laid the foundation for a democratic and ethical framework, balancing individual liberty with societal harmony. It promoted peace, prosperity, and respect for diversity, embracing shared values across religious and cultural boundaries (Elkarimah, 2016; Ihsan, 2012). Ishak and Ab Aziz (2022) highlighted the Medina Charter as a pioneering document in interfaith relations, advocating mutual respect and cooperation among religious communities in a time where minority rights were not politically or socially prioritised. It established key principles such as fostering good neighbourliness, providing mutual assistance, safeguarding the persecuted, and ensuring religious liberty. This framework recognised all individuals in Medina as equal members of society, irrespective of their faith or ethnicity (Muslih, 2010).

The term “community” in the Islamic context stems from the Arabic word *musyarakah*, meaning cooperation or interaction among individuals with shared circumstances. Ibn Khaldun conceptualised Madani Society as one that achieves *umran*, a state of prosperity and excellence in civilisation. Such a society reflects the ethical teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah, embodying values of justice, tolerance, and mutual respect (Andriani et al., 2018). The Qur’an describes this ideal society using terms like *Ummatan Wahidah* (One Community), *Ummatan Wasathan* (Moderate Community), *Khairi Ummah* (Best Nation), and *Baladatun Thayyibatun* (A Good Land) (Nany, 2018). Following Prophet Muhammad’s migration to Medina, the urban society he built became a model of coexistence among diverse groups, including polytheists, Jews, Muhajirin, and Ansar. This example demonstrates the unifying potential of Islamic values in fostering inclusive and harmonious communities (Ebtehal & Zainuddin, 2019). Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1977) emphasised that members of a Madani Society exhibit moral refinement and noble character, contributing to the greater good of their community (al-Attas, 1997). Thus, the Madani Society represents the culmination of a civilisation shaped by religious principles and urban values, reflecting a continuous process of societal development (Ilma & Alfian, 2020).

The Medina Charter further underscores *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *taawun* (mutual assistance) as central tenets. Ardiansyah (2020) defined religious tolerance as the right of every individual to choose and practise their beliefs without coercion. This approach aligns with the principles of *dakwah*, which advocate for calm, respectful engagement to foster understanding and harmony. Prophet Muhammad SAW exemplified remarkable leadership and organisational skills, transforming a fragmented and chaotic environment into the disciplined and harmonious state of Madinah. Through his governance, he replaced internal conflict with stability and peace, demonstrating unparalleled administrative capability. Despite limited military resources, he successfully defended the state against significantly larger forces, showcasing his strategic acumen.

As a legislator, he introduced a comprehensive legal framework grounded in justice and equality, ensuring that even leaders, including himself, were subject to the same laws as common citizens. This system upheld impartiality and fairness, setting a precedent for governance and legal accountability. The Prophet’s teachings extended beyond governance, providing guidance for individuals at every level of society, whether rulers or citizens, affluent or underprivileged, and in contexts of both peace and conflict. His approach encompassed not only spiritual and ethical dimensions, but also practical aspects such as commerce and material welfare, creating a holistic framework for societal well-being. At the heart of the Madani Society, the Prophet established the family as its foundational unit, offering a model of family life rooted in mutual respect, compassion, and responsibility. His legacy continues to serve as a timeless example of how leadership, law, and social structure can harmonise to create a just and prosperous society. By respecting diverse perspectives, the example set by Prophet Muhammad in Medina provides timeless guidance for creating cohesive and inclusive societies today (Badron, 2023).

Prophetic communication

The teachings and values of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) remain timeless and relevant, extending even into the modern era shaped by rapid technological advancements and digital transformation. As human interaction increasingly shifts to the digital realm, the need for moral guidance rooted in the Prophet’s teachings becomes as essential in

virtual spaces as it has always been in physical life. Consequently, the principles of social interaction taught by Prophet (SAW) should be adapted and applied.

The Prophet's approach to communication centres on the principle of faith-based brotherhood (Syed Abdul Rahman et al., 2023). Anas RA reported: Prophet SAW said, *"No one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself"*. Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim (Riyad as-Salihin, No. 183). Islam highlights the importance of an individual's connection not only with God, but also with others to lead a religious life (Mohd Khalli et al., 2021). Philosophically, effective communication involves nurturing human relationships (*habl min-al-nas*) while remaining grounded in one's relationship with God (*habl min-Allah*).

Secondly, as social beings, humans are closely connected to communication, whether through verbal or non-verbal means. Conversation is regarded as one of the most prevalent and accessible forms of communication. In this regard, a key principle in prophetic communication is the encouragement to speak kindly or remain silent. The Prophet SAW said, *"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should not hurt his neighbour and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should serve his guest generously and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should speak what is good or keep silent."* Narrated by Bukhari (Sahih al-Bukhari, No. 6136). This hadith highlights the significance of selecting words carefully in communication. If you cannot express something positive, it is better to remain silent than to speak. This also involves avoiding rude, insulting, or harmful language towards others (Syed Abdul Rahman et al., 2023).

Thirdly, in certain situations, excessive talking can not only lead to sin, but can also be seen as undesirable. Speaking too much without considering the quality or value of the conversation can create problems and have negative consequences. The Prophet SAW said, *"Indeed the most beloved among you to me, and the nearest to sit with me on the Day of Judgment is the best of you in character. And indeed, the most disliked among you to me, and the one sitting furthest from me on the Day of Judgement are the Thartharun, and the Mutashaddiqun and the Muthafaihiqun."* They said: *"O Messenger of Allah! We know about the Thartharun, and the Mutashaddiqun, but what about the Muthafaihiqun?"* He said: *"The arrogant."* Narrated by Tirmizi (Jami'at-Tirmidhi, No. 2018). Excessive talk without wisdom or a clear goal can result in wasted time, energy, and distract from more important matters. Moreover, conversations lacking thoughtful consideration or sound judgment can lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, or the spread of slander and false information.

Finally, in public, it is essential to uphold a respectful attitude, value others' opinions, and engage in constructive communication. However, disagreements or conflicts can arise, leading to arguments that disrupt harmony (Muhammad, 2017). One communication principle from the Prophet's teachings is to avoid arguments, even when individuals are confident in their position. Prophet Muhammad SAW stressed the importance of preserving peace, safeguarding relationships, and steering clear of unnecessary conflicts. In the context of social well-being, this means refraining from escalating disagreements, engaging in endless debates, or intentionally stirring up conflicts, while communicating wisely, fostering good relationships, and contributing to a more positive virtual environment (Badron, 2023). The Prophet SAW said: *"I guarantee a house in Jannah for one who gives up arguing, even if he is in the right; and I guarantee a home in the middle of Jannah for one who abandons lying even for the sake of fun; and I guarantee a house in the highest part of Jannah for one who has good manners."* Narrated by Abu Dawud (Riyad as-Salihin, No. 629).

The Prophet's communication in fostering social well-being highlights the importance of applying his teachings in today's world. These insights should serve as a guide for society, based on prophetic communication, to not only create a healthy and secure social network ecosystem, but also align with the sharia of Allah SWT. In conclusion, these elements jointly underscore the importance of prophetic communication, social cohesion, and the Madani Society idea in promoting diversity, equity, and harmonic cohabitation within society.

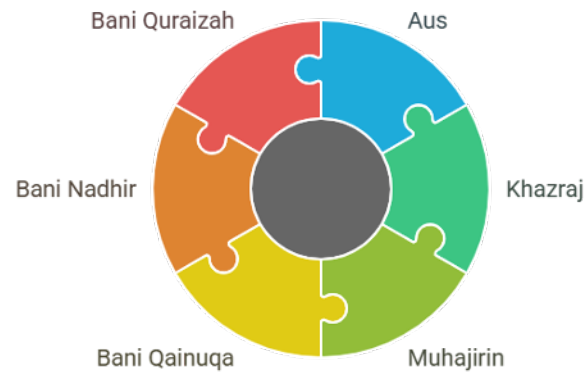


Figure 1. People of Madinah during prophecy

METHODS

The study utilised a qualitative approach to data collection. The methodology is advantageous for research since it provides a full understanding of the subject matter (Kumar, 2018).

Utilising the library research technique, the researcher gathered information on the topic that was the focus of the inquiry. In order to gather information for the study, the researcher looked at a variety of sources, including articles, journals, scientific studies, theses, and papers written in Malay, English, and Arabic. These were sourced from 6 journals in English, 12 journals in Bahasa Melayu and 1 in Arabic. The sources were chosen based on the general theme of prophetic communication and narrowed down into the specific element of communication.

This research utilised the inductive method, which is a bottom-up approach, to conduct data analysis, discover patterns, and come to conclusions (Lodico et al., 2010). The utilisation of this analytical method provided the researchers the ability to conduct in-depth investigations into the concept of an inclusive society, the Madinah society that existed during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and the Madani concept for the purpose of inquiry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First Greeting in Madinah

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَلَامٍ، قَالَ لَمَّا قَدِمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْمَدِينَةَ انْجَفَلَ النَّاسُ إِلَيْهِ وَقِيلَ قَدِمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَجِئْتُ فِي النَّاسِ لَأَنْظُرَ إِلَيْهِ فَلَمَّا اسْتَبَيَّنْتُ وَجْهَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَرَفْتُ

أَنَّ وَجْهَهُ لَيْسَ بِوَجْهِ كَذَّابٍ وَكَانَ أَوَّلَ شَيْءٍ تَكَلَّمَ بِهِ أَنْ قَالَ " أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَفْشُوا السَّلَامَ وَأَطْعِمُوا الطَّعَامَ وَصَلُّوا
وَالنَّاسُ نِيَامٌ تَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ بِسَلَامٍ " . قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ صَحِيحٌ .

‘Abdullah bin Salam said: “When the Messenger of Allah (SAW) arrived-meaning in Al-Madinah – the people came out to meet him. It was said that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) had arrived, so I went among the people to get a look at him. When I gazed upon the face of the Messenger of Allah (SAW), I knew that this face was not the face of a liar. The first thing that he spoke about was that he said: ‘O you people! Spread the Salam, feed(others), and perform Salat while the people are sleeping; you will enter Paradise with (the greeting of) Salam.’” (Sahih) (Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2485)

This is the first day the Prophet (SAW) arrived in Madinah. None of the residents of Madinah have ever seen the Prophet. Madinah, a varied society including the predominant Ansar (Auz and Khazraj) and a minority of Jews, shall be esteemed with affection and benevolence. The hadith explicitly employs *سُالِمُوا* without any specificity or particular attention to either the Ansar or the Jews. The Prophet employed an inclusive salutation to foster first sense of oneness, respect, and mutual affection. In a different hadith:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: (لَا تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا، وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّى تَحَابُّوا، أَوْ لَا أَدُلُّكُمْ
عَلَى شَيْءٍ إِذَا فَعَلْتُمُوهُ تَحَابَبْتُمْ، أَفْشُوا السَّلَامَ بَيْنَكُمْ)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “You shall not enter Paradise until you believe, and you have not believed until you love one another. Shall I tell you of something you can do to make you love one another? Spread the greetings of Salam (peace) amongst yourselves (i.e. between each other). (Hisn al-Muslim 224)

Ahmad Ayoub @ Ayub (2016) elucidated that the above hadith signifies that *Salam* is the cornerstone and catalyst for love, which is indicative of the completeness of faith, thus facilitating our entry into His paradise. The Prophet meticulously chose the suitable phrases during crucial times to ignite the popularisation of Islam and its significance to the people of Madinah. The Prophet underscored the significance of upholding mutual respect and decorum when replying to welcomes from non-believers as well.

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - " إِذَا سَلَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ فَقُولُوا
وَعَلَيْكُمْ " .

It was narrated that Anas bin Malik said “the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said”: “When any of the People of the Book greets you with Salam (peace), then say, Wa ‘alaikum (and also upon you).” (Sunan Ibn Majah 3697)

Therefore, if a non-Muslim welcomes us without using any harsh words, one should answer in kind or with greater courtesy. This need arises from the necessity to engage in communication within society, a requirement rooted in the moral and ethical principles emphasised in Islam.

Execution of muakhah in Medina among Muslims

In Madinah, three distinct groups came together to form a vibrant and diverse society: the Muhajirin, the Ansar, and the Jewish tribes. The Muhajirin were a group of immigrants who had fled Mecca to escape persecution, arriving in Medina with little more than their faith. Without property or permanent residences, they were in need of support, which was provided by the locals. The Ansar, the indigenous residents of Madinah, comprised two main tribes, the Auz and the Khazraj, both of whom had embraced Islam. Unlike the Muhajirin, the Ansar were settled in Medina, enjoying both financial stability and access to the city's resources.

The Jewish population of Madinah was made up of several tribes, including the Bani Qainuqa, Bani Nadhir, and Bani Quraizah, as well as other Arab tribes who had adopted Judaism. Estimates suggest there were around 4,400 Jews in total, with the Bani Qainuqa being the largest and most prominent group, numbering around 1,500 individuals (Ibn Saad, 1968).

When Prophet Muhammad (SAW) migrated to Madinah, the city's social fabric was complex and divided, with significant economic, cultural, and religious diversity. After the construction of the mosque, the Prophet saw the need to unify these groups. He initiated the *muakhah*, a formal bond of brotherhood, between the Muhajirin and the Ansar, creating a sense of solidarity and mutual support. According to reports, this fraternal alliance included pairs of individuals from both groups, sometimes 45 pairs, other times 100 individuals, who were bonded as brothers in faith. Notable pairings included Abu Bakr and Kharijah bin Zaid, Umar bin al-Khattab and 'Itban bin Malik, Uthman bin Affan and Aus bin Thabit, and Abd al-Rahman bin 'Auf and Sa'd bin al-Rabi' (Al-Mubarakfuri, 2012). This initiative was not only symbolic, but was also a practical solution to help the Muhajirin integrate into the Madinah society.

The Prophet's intentional and strategic use of the *muakhah* served as a powerful response to the challenges faced by the early Muslim community in Madinah. It addressed immediate social issues such as adaptation to a new environment, economic stability, and the breakdown of cultural barriers between the immigrant Muhajirin and the established Ansar. The *muakhah* allowed the community to evolve into a unified, resilient, and cohesive society that could withstand external and internal challenges.

This approach, which demonstrates both visionary leadership and practical wisdom, laid the foundation for a harmonious, thriving society. It shows how intentional, inclusive communication and community-building can help diverse groups overcome their differences and work together toward common goals. The lessons from this historical example are invaluable in addressing contemporary social challenges, where fostering unity and cooperation remains crucial.

The concept of Madani Society in Malaysia

Relational needs are foundational for nurturing and sustaining meaningful social ties. The act of engaging in communication to fulfil these needs is not just a social tool, but essential for building the relationships that are inherent to human nature. These interactions align closely with the ideals of prosperity, respect, and compassion championed by the Madani concept. Through communication, we meet our relational needs by initiating, strengthening, and, at times, gracefully dissolving connections, an essential part of creating cohesive, thriving communities.

Salman (2023) highlighted an intriguing aspect of human interaction: the power of non-verbal communication. Before words are even exchanged, our body language, tone, and expressions serve as an early signal of our desire to connect. This first step sets the stage for deeper engagement, where verbal communication follows to establish the conversation. Relationships, as Salman explains, evolve gradually, becoming richer as individuals engage in mutual self-disclosure. This process builds trust and intimacy, paving the way for emotional closeness. Once a relationship is formed, its longevity depends on the ongoing communication that expresses affection, validates the other's worth, and demonstrates empathy.

In a multicultural society like Malaysia, however, communication for relational purposes may not always yield the desired outcomes. As Salman points out, the diverse cultural landscape means that communication patterns are not universal. Quiet or overly confrontational communication styles, while prevalent in some cultures, can be counterproductive and even harm relationships in the context of the Madani community. Such communication patterns can create distance rather than connection. Instead, promoting empathetic communication that is both polite and understanding becomes crucial. Simple yet powerful acts, like verbalising gratitude with phrases such as “You are an exceptional friend,” or taking steps to deepen bonds through shared experiences, help build a culture of mutual respect and neighbourliness.

When individuals make a conscious effort to cultivate respectful and empathetic communication, they contribute to a more inclusive, cooperative society, one where relational need are met and community ties are fortified. This approach goes beyond mere interaction; it creates a space for connection, understanding, and emotional support. In the context of the Madani Society, fostering these relational bonds becomes a cornerstone for social harmony and collective prosperity.

The Madani Society to promote inclusive-prophetic society

This study uncovers five exciting and vital aspects that not only deepen our understanding of the Madani Society, but also open up new avenues for research and real-world application, particularly in Malaysia.

First, the fundamental concepts of democracy in the Madani Society are groundbreaking. Rooted in Islamic principles, it celebrates the core values of equality and shared responsibility, advocating for equal rights and active participation from all, regardless of race or religion. This democratic approach is not just a theory but a living, breathing system that empowers individuals to have a voice in shaping their communities.

Tolerance (*Tasamuh*) stands as another key pillar, where the Madani Society goes beyond mere tolerance to create an environment where people can freely express their beliefs without fear or coercion. This openness encourages diverse viewpoints, enhancing social harmony and coexistence. It is a dynamic celebration of individual freedom and collective peace.

Then, there's the concept of mutual assistance (*Taawun*), which is at the heart of the Madani Society. It is not just about helping others but also, about building a culture where collaboration and support are second nature. This collective responsibility fosters unity across religious and cultural divides, creating a society where everyone stands together. Adding to this, Tan's study (2019) highlighted how visitors' connection to cultural heritage can spark greater empathy and understanding, mirroring how Prophet Muhammad's deep understanding of Madinah's social dynamics bridged divides when he arrived.

The Medina Charter's principles are another exciting layer, with a strong focus on protecting minorities. This isn't just about tolerance; it is about actively dismantling prejudice and establishing clear guidelines for peaceful coexistence. The Charter sets a bold precedent for ensuring the rights of all individuals, especially the marginalised, within a community. On a national level, studies like Tan et al.'s (2019) research into cyberbullying offer fascinating insights into how societal attitudes can be transformed through education and awareness, especially by addressing harmful language and behaviours that harm minority groups.

Finally, the Madani Society's commitment to communication and religious freedom adds an inspiring dimension. This refers to fostering a culture where dialogue between different religious groups is not only respectful, but is rooted in mutual assistance and understanding. Through thoughtful, considerate communication, the Madani Society creates a space for acceptance, where individuals are encouraged to engage openly and empathetically, contributing to a richer, more inclusive society.

Together, these elements form a blueprint for a thriving, harmonious community, one where values of democracy, tolerance, mutual aid, and respect for diversity shape the fabric of society. This paper highlights the dynamic power of these principles, not just as ideals but as actionable pathways for fostering a future of unity and understanding.

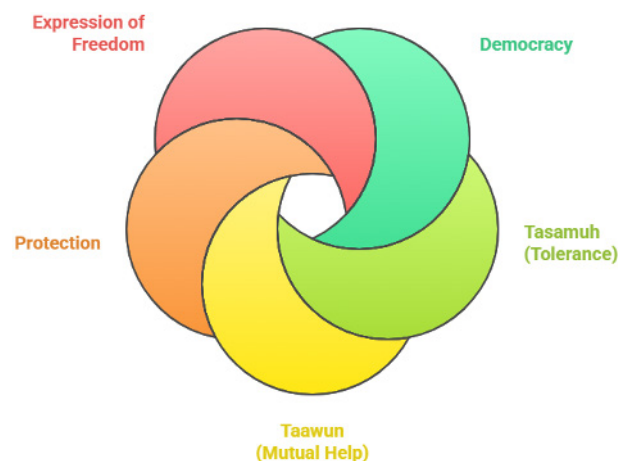


Figure 2. Concept of Madani Society

CONCLUSION

This paper delves into the dynamic connection between prophetic communication and the concept of the Madani Society, uncovering how these two principles intertwine to foster a sense of belonging and appreciation for every individual. Prophetic communication is designed to ensure inclusivity, striving to create environments where diversity, equity, academic success, and social harmony flourish. While challenges like linguistic and cultural divides persist, the importance of inclusive policies and continuous training cannot be overstated.

Madjid (2019) as well as Ishak and Ab Aziz (2022) highlighted that the roots of the Madani Society stem from the thriving Islamic community Prophet Muhammad (SAW) established in Medina, emphasising that education, democratic values, and ethical principles form the backbone of a just society. The Madinah Charter's focus on peaceful coexistence

and safeguarding minorities reinforces the notion that every individual, regardless of faith or ethnicity, must be acknowledged as a vital part of society.

This concept is further bolstered by the profound values of benevolence and mutual support. The Prophet's warm welcome upon arriving in Madinah serves as a powerful example of how unity and respect can be cultivated among diverse groups, including the Ansar and the Jewish community. His strategic implementation of *muakhah*, bridging the gaps between the Ansar, Muhajirin, and Jews, addressed key societal issues, laying the foundation for economic resilience, adaptability, and stronger community ties. Salman (2023) added, *muakhah* brings the principles of Madani Society to life in Malaysia, stressing the role of communication in meeting the needs of relationships within a diverse society. His advocacy for respectful and compassionate communication highlights the importance of building meaningful connections in a multicultural context. Lastly, this study underscores the vital role of open dialogue, social cohesion, and the Madani Society in nurturing a world where equality, diversity, and peaceful coexistence thrive.

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