

THE CONCEPT OF *AL-FALAH* (HOLISTIC SUCCESS) AS A FACTOR IN CREATING A SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF YAYASAN DAKWAH ISLAMIAH MALAYSIA (YADIM)

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Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 24.09.2024

Revised date: 24.10.2024

Accepted date: 12.11.2024

Published date: 13.12.2024

To cite this document:

Mohamad, R., & Sarif, S. M. (2024). The Concept Of *Al-Falah* (Holistic Success) As A Factor In Creating A Sustainable Competitive Advantage Of Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM). *International Journal of Law, Government and Communication*, 9 (38), 111-131.

DOI: 10.35631/IJLGC.938009

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore the concept of *Al-Falah* (holistic success) as the factor that can contribute to creating a sustainable competitive advantage for the public sector organization through a qualitative research design involving document analysis and semi-structured interviews. *Al-Falah* is a very rich word and dynamic term that is generally associated with action that constitutes a comprehensive meaning of success which is the intended result of sustainable competitive advantage. Sustainable competitive advantage is an important concept in strategic management that refers to an organization's ability to outperform its competitors. Competitiveness can be achieved through many factors such as product uniqueness, cost-effectiveness, innovation, and service quality. There is a difference between the aims of competitive advantage for a public sector organization with that of a private sector since their creation is to fulfil the responsibilities of government and not for commercial and profit orientation. The study affirmed that the *Al-Falah* (holistic success) concept as an appropriate framework to create sustainable competitive advantage for organizations in a public sector setting since the motivation is engaging in public good by providing their knowledge base and services for the benefit of the populace and not for profit and market orientation.

Keywords:

Al-Falah, Competitive Advantages, Public Sector, YADIM

Introduction

The public sector plays a crucial role in the development of a country. Its main task is to provide essential services that contribute to the well-being of society, such as education, healthcare, security, and infrastructure (Uyarra et al., 2020; Mahardhani, 2023; Zaim et al., 2024). Without

an effective and efficient public sector, a country will face various social and economic challenges (Cinar et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024). Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the public sector remains efficient, operates with integrity, and is responsive to the needs and demands of the people (Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024; Zaim et al., 2024). All organizations, whether in the public or private sector, must compete to secure the best and most effective resources available, particularly human talent and funding, to achieve their objectives.

The pursuit of competitiveness in the public sector differs from that in the private sector, as the private sector is primarily focused on financial gain, market size, and profit (Lieberman, 2021; Boukamcha, 2023; Boye et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024). In contrast, the public sector is more concerned with delivering quality services to citizens, making efficient use of public funds, and providing effective and efficient services to remain relevant (Fatima, De Souza & Dawson, 2020; Cinar et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024).

The public sector in Malaysia plays a vital role in bridging the gap between the government and its citizens. It consists of various government departments and agencies that provide essential services to the public and ensure the successful implementation of government policies (Anwary, 2023; Mahdzan et al., 2023; Manaf et al., 2023). Thus, It acts as a crucial link between the government and the people, ensuring that enacted policies are effectively implemented for the well-being of the community (Cinar et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024; Zaim et al., 2024).

The success of the public sector is measured not by financial performance but by the quality and effectiveness of the services it delivers to citizens. It is not based on factors such as profit margins, market control, revenue growth, or the number of products and services considered best-sellers (Lieberman, 2021; Boukamcha, 2023; Boye et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024). Unlike the private sector, where financial performance and market share are key indicators of success, the public sector's success is determined by its ability to deliver high-quality, effective services in line with the commitments outlined in its customer charter (Fatima, De Souza & Dawson, 2020; Cinar et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024). The true measure of public sector performance lies in how well it meets the needs of the community, ensures the efficient use of public resources, and upholds transparency and accountability in providing services that enhance the well-being of society (Anwary, 2023; Mahdzan et al., 2023; Manaf et al., 2023).

In today's era of achievement and result-oriented management, the success of the public sector increasingly depends on the development of strategic management capabilities within public agencies. Strategic management serves as a core process that integrates and aligns all key activities and functions to achieve the organization's long-term strategic objectives (Anwary, 2023; Mahdzan et al., 2023; Boye et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024). This approach is not only essential for improving the long-term viability and effectiveness of public sector organizations but also ensures their relevance by addressing both substantive policy objectives and enhancing management capacity (Kozioł-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021; Cinar et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024). By fostering a strategic mindset, public agencies can better respond to changing environments, anticipate challenges, and remain adaptable while maintaining transparency, accountability, and efficient service delivery (Cinar et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024). This, in turn, strengthens public trust and ensures that the public sector continues to meet the evolving needs of the communities it serves.

Malaysia's governmental services and organisations are not exempted to the discussed developments. Furthermore, the Malaysian government has other significant strategic difficulties, including a national debt surpassing 1 trillion, deficit pressures, and concerns pertaining to technology, innovation, and globalisation (Annamalah et al., 2024; Ishak & Thiruchelvam, 2024; Suprayitno & Abbas, 2024). Consequently, public sector entities in Malaysia must always endeavour to improve their competitiveness (Das, 2024; Ishak & Thiruchelvam, 2024; Suprayitno & Abbas, 2024). They can no longer mirror the public services of the 1970s and 1980s, when individuals were more compliant and had restricted access to internet technology and social media (Annamalah et al., 2024; Ishak & Thiruchelvam, 2024). The government acknowledges the significance of public services in executing its goals for the populace (Mahdzan et al., 2023; Boye et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024). The public's opinion of the government and its faith in it predominantly hinge on the efficacy with which it meets its obligations (Cinar et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024). Consequently, public services must be nimble in improving their resilience and competitiveness. They must address public expectations (adaptation), provide efficient and effective services (competitiveness), and foster a favourable and reputable image (value) (Ibrahim et al., 2020; Zaim et al., 2024).

The research problem addresses a significant gap, as competitiveness in the public sector is closely tied to the sustainability and relevance of public services (Kozioł-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021; Barney et al., 2021; Posen et al., 2023; Shukri & Azalan, 2023). It requires a willingness to change and adapt to current needs and challenges. Thus, fostering competitiveness in the public sector is crucial not only for ensuring efficiency and effectiveness but also for meeting societal needs and contributing to national development (Alvarenga et al., 2020; Kozioł-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021; Posen et al., 2023; Shukri & Azalan, 2023). The pressing issue is how to motivate the public sector to remain competitive in meeting the public's needs and expectations. In this study, the focus is on Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM). Based on the discussion, two research questions arise: (a) Can *Al-Falah* become a factor in creating sustainable competitive advantage? (b) How can *Al-Falah* become a factor in creating sustainable competitive advantage for YADIM? These two questions have been combined to form the study's objective: to explore the concept of *Al-Falah* in creating sustainable competitive advantage for public sector organizations, specifically Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM).

Literature Review

The literature review for this study focuses on the four keywords which are a competitive advantage, *Al-Falah*, public sector, and Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM). The emphasis of the literature review is to grasp and comprehend these keywords to develop relationships and linkages that will facilitate answering the above research objective.

Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is a quality possessed by a company, either in the form of a specific product or market position. This quality or uniqueness enables a company to achieve a better standing in the competitive market (Ansoff & McDonnell, 1990; Khalifa, 2001; Barney et al., 2021). For it to be truly effective, competitive advantage must be sustained over the long term.

A company acquires its competitive advantage through various efforts. This can be achieved through a set of attributes or actions that allow it to outperform its competitors (Khalifa, 2001;

Wang, 2011; Barney et al., 2021). These efforts can be internal, as explained by the resource-based view (Khalifa, 2001; Barney et al., 2021; Posen et al., 2023; Shukri & Azalan, 2023), or external, as outlined by the market-based view (Barney et al., 2021; Posen et al., 2023; Mhd Sarif et al., 2023).

In essence, competitive advantage is the result of a company's performance in a competitive market (Porter, 2008; Khalifa, 2001; Wang, 2011; Barney et al., 2021). Competitive advantages can manifest in various forms, such as low-cost production, product differentiation, or an effective focus strategy (Khalifa, 2001; Barney et al., 2021; Posen et al., 2023). Fundamentally, competitive advantage develops from the value a company creates for its customers, where the value exceeds the production cost.

A company gains competitive advantage when its actions in the industry or market create economic value, particularly when few competitors are able to replicate these actions (Barney, 2002; Khalifa, 2001; Barney et al., 2021; Posen et al., 2023). Indeed, competitive advantage is a combination of both internal and external efforts. According to Kay (1995), four key indicators can be used to measure a company's competitive advantage: (a) innovation, which involves creating new market demand for existing products, introducing new products to existing markets, and applying new technology in innovative ways; (b) reputation, which reflects the company's relationships with stakeholders and its closeness to customers; (c) the ability to produce high-quality processes or products; and (d) architecture, which encompasses the company's internal, external, and network connections. Additionally, (e) strategic assets represent the company's ability to maintain its valuable resources, both tangible and intangible, such as knowledge and intellectual property rights.

Al Falah

"Al-Falah" is an Arabic term that holds significant meaning in an Islamic context. Literally translated, it means "success" or "prosperity." However, in a broader and more profound sense, *al-Falah* refers to achieving success not only in worldly affairs but also in the spiritual realm, particularly in the context of Islamic teachings (Muhamad Ali et al., 2021).

In Islamic tradition, *al-Falah* is often associated with attaining spiritual success or salvation, especially in the Hereafter. It implies living life according to Islamic principles, which encompass ethical behavior, social justice, personal development, and a deep commitment to faith. The term is frequently used in the Quran and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) to describe the ultimate success of attaining Paradise and earning the pleasure of Allah (Hrp et al., 2023).

There are many attributes of the people of *al-Falah* mentioned in the Quran. According to Abdul Mukti (2020), there are 23 characteristics of these people, including performing prayers, being obedient and doing good deeds, having piety toward Allah SWT, avoiding usury, striving in the path of Allah, abstaining from alcohol and gambling, not associating partners with Allah, not practicing divination, showing gratitude for Allah's blessings, guarding one's gaze, covering one's *aurat*, remembering Allah, believing in the unseen and the Day of Judgment, giving charity, believing in revealed books, promoting good, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, obeying the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), paying *zakat*, repenting, avoiding futile actions, not committing adultery, and fulfilling trust and promises. These attributes of *al-*

Falah are rooted in a combination of faith (*Aqidah*), Sharia, and morality (*Akhlaq*) (Al-Maraghi, 2001; Quraish Shihab, 2002; Abdul Mukti, 2020).

In essence, *al-Falah* has dual ultimate ends. It cannot be achieved solely through acts for the Hereafter; it requires a balance between worldly deeds and spiritual acts to attain *al-Falah* (Al-Maraghi, 2001; Quraish Shihab, 2002; Abdul Mukti, 2020). Acts for the Hereafter alone are insufficient, as human life involves relationships with others, personal safety, and well-being (Alvarenga et al., 2020; Kozioł-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021; Posen et al., 2023; Shukri & Azalan, 2023). Therefore, *al-Falah* can be examined in two parts: worldly acts and acts for the Hereafter.

Al-Falah also relates to success, which is mentioned in Arabic through three different terms: *Najah*, *Fawz*, and *Falah* (Azzaddin, 2001; Abdul Mukti, 2020; Shukri & Azalan, 2023). Two of these, *Fawz* and *Falah*, are used in the Quran, while *Najah*, meaning success in getting what one desires without an ethical dimension, is not. *Najah* is merely descriptive and does not imply continuity (Azzaddin, 2001).

On the other hand, *Falah* is a rich and complex term. It implies more than mere success; it connotes prosperity and eternal blessings. Derived from the word meaning "to cultivate the land," *Falah* encompasses four dimensions: (a) a dynamic dimension—striving to thrive; (b) a universal dimension—achieving *Falah* through a holistic life effort; (c) an ethical dimension—doing good with both intention and actions to be blessed (Ibn Mandhur); and (d) a continuity dimension—enjoying the results of *Falah* in both this life and the Hereafter (Azzaddin, 2001). The distinction between *Fawz* and *Falah* lies in their relation to effort and reward. *Falah* is a dynamic term associated with the actions necessary to achieve it, making one a *Muflihun* (Azzaddin, 2001; Abdul Mukti, 2020; Shukri & Azalan, 2023). This is highlighted in the Quran, while *Fawz* refers to the reward of success, such as the attainment of Paradise. In conclusion, *Falah* is more closely linked to effort, while *Fawz* is associated with reward. The word *Falah* and its derivatives are mentioned 40 times in the Quran, while *Fawz* is mentioned 29 times. The word *Najah* does not appear in the Quran at all.

In conclusion, *al-Falah* is a multifaceted concept that encompasses not only worldly success but also spiritual prosperity and eternal blessings in the Hereafter. Rooted in Islamic teachings, it emphasizes ethical behavior, personal development, and adherence to faith, as well as the pursuit of both individual and communal well-being. Through its various forms and meanings, *al-Falah* highlights the importance of balancing worldly efforts with spiritual acts to attain true and lasting success. The distinction between *Fawz* and *Falah* further illustrates the difference between reward and the effort required to achieve it, with *Falah* representing a dynamic and holistic process that involves continuous striving, ethical conduct, and the fulfilment of responsibilities. Ultimately, *al-Falah* serves as a guiding principle for Muslims, directing them towards a life of purpose, balance, and fulfilment in both this world and the Hereafter.

Public Sector

The public sector is commonly referred to as the machinery of government, encompassing various departments, agencies, and ministries responsible for managing essential services such as healthcare, security, and infrastructure in Malaysia (Uyarra et al., 2020; Mahardhani, 2023; Zaim et al., 2024). Without an effective and efficient public sector, a country may face a range of social and economic challenges (Cinar et al., 2024; Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024).

Therefore, it is critical to ensure that the public sector remains efficient, operates with integrity, and is responsive to the needs and demands of the people (Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024; Zaim et al., 2024). The public sector must function effectively to provide services to the people and manage the country's administration. It serves as the backbone of the nation's stability and development, ensuring the implementation of government policies, enforcement of laws, and the efficient delivery of public services (Manaf et al., 2023; Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024).

One of the core functions of the public sector is the development and implementation of government policies, including those related to economic, social, and infrastructure development aimed at improving the living standards of the population (Uyarra et al., 2020; Mahardhani, 2023; Zaim et al., 2024). Public services such as education, healthcare, safety, and social welfare are vital for ensuring the well-being of the people and promoting community harmony (Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024; Zaim et al., 2024). Furthermore, the public sector is integral to the planning and execution of development projects that create job opportunities and stimulate economic growth (Knies et al., 2024; Vivona, 2024). Investments in infrastructure, such as roads, airports, and ports, are prime examples of the sector's role in fostering economic development (Supramaniam et al., 2021; Zaim et al., 2024).

In conclusion, the three levels of government—Federal, State, and Local—along with the public sector, are critical to the smooth and effective administration of Malaysia. They work in concert to meet the needs of the people across various levels, contributing to the country's development, stability, and overall well-being.

Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM)

Research on Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM) in the field of strategic management is limited. There have been some deliberations on Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM) into its role, internal dynamics, and impact on Islamic *da'wah* in Malaysia. For example, Esa, Abdullah, and Deuraseh (2017) argued that a need for a solid perspective on the implementation of *da'wah* management within YADIM. YADIM has institutionalized Islamic *da'wah* activities, aligning them with broader national objectives. YADIM's role in coordinating *da'wah* efforts across various regions and institutions, ensuring that Islamic teachings are promoted effectively. This study highlights the structured approach taken by YADIM to enhance the reach and efficiency of *da'wah* efforts, underlining its importance in Malaysia's Islamic landscape.

As for Mohd Zaidi (2019), some dimensions of Islamic knowledge, focusing on the level of awareness among YADIM staff regarding the Islamic concept of *hibah* (Islamic gift). There is a need for internal education and awareness within YADIM itself, illustrating that staff understanding of important Islamic financial concepts like *hibah* is crucial to the organization's effectiveness. Zaidi's findings suggest that YADIM must continue to invest in staff development to ensure they are equipped with both the theological knowledge and practical skills necessary for impactful *da'wah*.

Mustapa (2020) explores the factors influencing employee motivation within YADIM. The study identifies key motivational elements that drive staff performance, which are essential for the successful execution of *da'wah* programs. This research reveals that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators play a significant role in shaping the commitment and productivity of

YADIM employees. Understanding these factors is critical for improving staff engagement and ensuring the sustainability of *da'wah* activities.

Dahalan (2008) offers a historical perspective on *da'wah* activities in Malaysia, particularly focusing on the role of the Al-Rahmaniah movement. This work contextualizes YADIM's role within the broader history of Islamic *da'wah* in Malaysia, highlighting how past initiatives have shaped the current landscape. Dahalan's research demonstrates that YADIM, like earlier movements, plays a pivotal role in the propagation of Islamic values, albeit in a more structured and government-supported format. In summary, the deliberation of these studies highlights the multifaceted nature of YADIM's role in promoting Islamic *da'wah* in Malaysia.

While Esa et al. (2017) focus on the implementation of *da'wah* activities, Mohd Zaidi (2019) and Mustapa (2020) bring attention to the internal workings of YADIM, particularly staff awareness and motivation. Dahalan (2008) situates YADIM within the broader historical context of Islamic *da'wah* movements in Malaysia, underlining its significance in continuing this legacy. Together, these studies suggest that while YADIM has made substantial strides in *da'wah* management, ongoing efforts in internal education and staff motivation are crucial for its sustained success.

YADIM is an Islamic agency established by the Malaysian government, playing a pivotal role in coordinating *da'wah* (Islamic outreach) activities across the nation. According to YADIM (2024), the organization was founded during the tenure of Malaysia's second Prime Minister, Abdul Razak Hussein, on 1 Muharram 1394, corresponding to 25 January 1974. The establishment of YADIM aims to align and coordinate the activities of various *da'wah* bodies and NGOs, ensuring that their efforts are in harmony with national policies and act as a driving force for the spread of *da'wah* in Malaysia. YADIM is registered under the Trustees (Incorporation) Act 1952 [Act 258] and is directly responsible to the Prime Minister's Department (Dahalan, 2008; Esa et al., 2017; Mohd Zaidi, 2019; Mustapa, 2020).

In his founding speech, the late Tun Haji Abdul Razak Hussein expressed his high hopes for YADIM (Muis et al., 2022). He stated: *"I would like to emphasize that the purpose of the government in establishing the Dakwah Foundation Islamiah Malaysia is to intensify and establish the Islamic preaching movement in this country, which is an Islamic country that has played an important role in defending the purity of the Islamic religion and enhancing its teachings both locally and abroad. I would like to state that the government hopes, through the Dakwah Foundation Islamiah Malaysia, to be able to coordinate and improve preaching activities at all levels, whether managed by State Religious Councils in each state or certain voluntary bodies or organizations throughout the country."*

According to Muis et al. (2022), based on Tun Abdul Razak's speech, the government's vision and commitment to bolstering *da'wah* (Islamic preaching) efforts in Malaysia at the inauguration of Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM). The government sought to formalise and intensify the Islamic proselytising movement in a country that not only upholds Islam as its official religion but also plays a critical role in promoting and safeguarding Islamic teachings both domestically and internationally by establishing YADIM. When Tun Abdul Razak emphasis on "defending the purity of the Islamic religion" underscores the significance of ensuring that *da'wah* activities are in accordance with authentic Islamic teachings, thereby countering any misinterpretations or distortions (Dahalan, 2008; Esa et al., 2017; Mohd Zaidi,

2019; Mustapa, 2020). The purpose of the establishment of YADIM was to function as a central coordinating body that would supervise and improve da'wah initiatives at all levels, regardless of whether they are conducted by State Religious Councils, voluntary organisations, or other Islamic entities in Malaysia.

Tun Abdul Razak's vision also emphasises the importance of YADIM in coordinating *da'wah* activities, thereby ensuring that the endeavours of a variety of organisations are unified under a common national agenda (Dahalan, 2008; Esa et al., 2017; Mohd Zaidi, 2019; Mustapa, 2020). This coordination would enhance the efficacy of da'wah initiatives by ensuring that they are more organised, efficient, and effective in their goal of promoting Islamic values and reaching the Muslim population. In essence, the establishment of YADIM is indicative of a government initiative to institutionalise da'wah activities as a strategic measure to preserve Malaysia's Islamic identity and expand its influence on a national and international scale.

This vision is further supported by YADIM's role as defined by The Act on The Functions of the Minister in 1969, which outlines the following functions, namely (a) coordinate Islamic *da'wah* activities, (b) carry out *da'wah* programs, such as seminars, forums, lectures, and workshops, to enhance understanding of Islam, (c) publish explanatory materials about Islam and respond to propaganda that discredits Islam or spreads distorted Islamic teachings, (d) utilize modern methods and the latest technology in *da'wah* activities and produce knowledgeable and skilled Islamic preachers (Dahalan, 2008; Esa et al., 2017; Mohd Zaidi, 2019; Mustapa, 2020).

Based on these functions, YADIM has set three primary objectives: a. Coordinate Islamic *da'wah* activities. b. Coordinate *da'wah* activities through a social approach. c. Produce knowledgeable and skilled Islamic preachers. YADIM's vision is to lead *da'wah* efforts based on the Quran and Hadith. The agency strives to be an effective driving force that harnesses the potential of the *ummah* (Muslim community) through Islamic *da'wah* and related approaches. YADIM's mission is to implement and coordinate *da'wah* activities that transcend ideological and methodological boundaries (Dahalan, 2008; Esa et al., 2017; Mohd Zaidi, 2019; Mustapa, 2020).

Through its functions, YADIM has continued to play a crucial role in the development of Islamic outreach in Malaysia, ensuring that *da'wah* activities are aligned with national objectives while staying true to Islamic principles.

Based on the discussion, this research aims to explore the role of *Al-Falah* in sustaining competitive advantage for Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM). The concept of *Al-Falah* enables YADIM to create and maintain a competitive edge by integrating external, internal, and spiritual factors derived from *Al-Falah*. In this research framework, *Al-Falah* serves as the independent variable, while competitive advantage is the dependent variable. The underlying components of *Al-Falah* are drawn from the divine guidance of the Quran and Sunnah, reflecting the responsibilities of humans as servants of Allah (*ibadurrahman*) and as vicegerents on earth (*khalifah*). Competitive advantage is supported by two key variables: external and internal factors. Figure 1 illustrates the research framework.

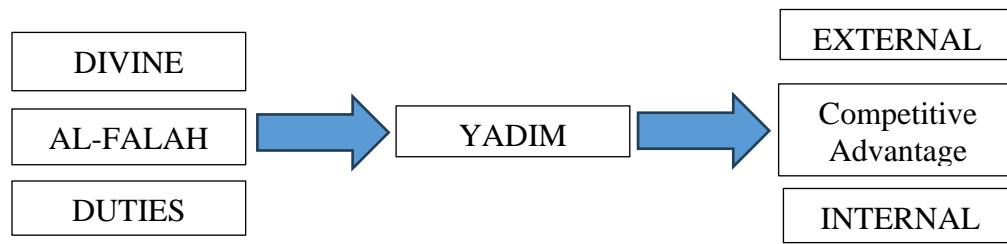


Figure 1: Research Framework

Methodology

This section is to describe how the research has been conducted by following the research ethics, procedures, processes, and norms. It begins with the research design (Kim, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Dunwoddie et al., 2023; Zarestky, 2023). The design is how the research was conducted. The research design was on qualitative research design. The data was collected through document analysis at YADIM and semi-structured interview with the purposive sampling (Dunwoddie et al., 2023; Zarestky, 2023). The researchers already determined the respondents. The qualitative research being employed because it can attain insights into the understanding of the *Al-Falah* concepts and their relation to creating competitive advantage in the public sector (Dahalan, 2008; Esa et al., 2017; Mohd Zaidi, 2019; Mustapa, 2020). It facilitates deep insights into the activities and approaches of Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM) in carrying out their roles and functions (Esa et al., 2017; Mohd Zaidi, 2019). The study also utilizes the document analysis method by carrying out document analysis regarding YADIM.

There were five respondents participated in the personal interview with informed consent (Esa et al., 2017; Mohd Zaidi, 2019). The respondents were divided into two groups. The first group was two informants. They were selected to provide insights on the first research objective of whether *Al Falah* can become a factor in creating a sustainable competitive advantage. They were selected due to their academic experience of more than 25 years of teaching and involvement in transformation projects.

The second group was selected to gain insight into how *Al-Falah* can become a factor in creating a sustainable competitive advantage for YADIM. Three informants were selected from YADIM with different positions and roles. One was the Ahli Lembaga Pemegang Amanah (Board of Trustee YADIM), one was a director holding a position in Research for YADIM and the other one was an Executive staff with 6 years of experience in YADIM and person-in-charge of Training for Youth with focus on students of Higher Learning Institute.

In terms of instruments, there two sets of semi-structured interview questions were prepared for the two groups of informants. The interview questions were referred to an expert for their comments and feedback for improvement purposes (Kim, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Dunwoddie et al., 2023; Zarestky, 2023). The informants were given semi-structured interview questions before the interview dates. The two sets of semi-structured interview questions. The first set was semi-structured interview questions with experts. Table 1 listed the interview questions for the expert.

Table 1: Interview Questions For The Expert

1. Tell Me About Yourself: Can you tell me briefly about yourself i.e. your name, your academic background, your past working experience?
2. Your Experience: How long have you been working in the public sector, what is your position now, and what are your roles and functions in the current position
3. What do you understand about competitive advantage and how important it is for an organization?
4. What is your opinion on the need for the public sector to be competitive and what are the sources of competitive advantage for the public sector?
5. What do you know or understand about the concept Al-Falah?
6. In your opinion, can Al Falah be one of the factors for competitive advantage, if yes why, and if not, why not?
7. What will be the challenges in employing the Al-Falah concept?
8. Thank you again for your willingness to be the interviewee

The second set is the interview questions with YADIM officers. Table 2 listed the interview questions for YADIM officers.

Table 2: Interview questions for YADIM Officers

1. Thank you for accepting my invitation to be interviewed to help with my PhD research related to Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM)
2. Before we continue my interview, I would like to inform you that this interview will be recorded to ensure the accuracy of the information and also the standards set in the qualitative study.
3. Can you give a little introduction, your academic background, and how long you have been working at YADIM as well as the positions and roles performed at YADIM?
4. In your opinion, what are some of the important successes of YADIM after 50 years of establishment? What are the steps or methods used by YADIM to achieve this major success?
5. What are the challenging obstacles for YADIM in achieving the goals of its establishment and explain why?
6. Explain the system in YADIM to build the competence and capacity of YADIM officers.
7. How is YADIM's relationship with the state religious department or council and da'wah NGO established (either through an official or unofficial platform) to preserve da'wah efforts in the state?
8. Thank you again for your willingness to accept my invitation to be interviewed and help me in my research.

In terms of data collection, the study identified five (5) informants for this study. The first two informants were selected based on their experience and as individuals. An email and WhatsApp were sent to both of them to seek their consent to be interviewed. Once consent was secured from both, an email and WhatsApp were sent to them with the attached interview questions. The interview questions have been reviewed by an expert together. The possible time and date for the interview session were discussed in the same email and WhatsApp. Both preferred that the interview session was conducted online. The interviews were conducted on the same day with one respondent in the morning and the others in the afternoon. The online platform used was Microsoft Teams. The duration of the interview session was approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The informants were both senior personnel not only in their positions but also in age. They responded very professionally and very cooperatively. They expressed their thoughts freely and without any feelings of intimidation. Microsoft Teams online platform was used during the online interview and equipped with a real-time transcription capability; therefore, the transcription process was done seamlessly and in real-time. The number of transcription pages was quite substantive thus it took some time to conduct the data analysis.

The second batch of informants were three staff from Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM). They were selected based on their roles and functions. Since the informants were representatives of YADIM, the consent process involved getting consent from IREC (as per attached) and also from the organization. The consent from YADIM was through an email sent to the CEO of YADIM. (As per attached). The email stipulated the intent of the interview and scope, the names of the identified staff, and attached the interview questions. The interview session was conducted for 3 days during the same week. The interview sessions were conducted using the online platform Microsoft Teams. The interview was conducted in Bahasa Malaysia to ensure clarity, in-depth discussion and to eliminate misunderstanding due to language. Since the transcription language in Microsoft Teams did not provide Bahasa Malaysia languages, all three interview sessions were conducted and recorded. The video recording in Bahasa Malaysia was transcribed using the CapCut applications. The Bahasa Malaysia transcription was then translated to English using Google Translate. Hence, the data analysis took some time to ensure accuracy by reviewing the translation and cross-checking with the video-recorded interview session.

The document analysis was conducted with the help of the Head of Planning YADIM. The arrangement was made by one of the informants from YADIM. The main document analysed was the YADIM Strategic Plan 2022-2024. In terms of data analysis, data in the study were analyzed using content analysis. The normal method was used. The first step was to read the transcript to identify relevant keywords and segments that were useful for the study. Coding was then assigned before putting into themes. It was done manually. The findings were then mapped with the YADIM Strategic Plan 2022-2024.

Findings

There are two parts of the findings based on the research questions. The first research question of whether *Al-Falah* can become a factor in creating a sustainable competitive advantage. There were two informants interviewed for this question and in the category of experts. The second research question was to gain insight into the activities carried out by YADIM and to link it with *Al-Falah* as a factor in creating a sustainable competitive advantage for YADIM. There were three informants interviewed for this question and in the category of YADIM staff.

Experts

Two experts were chosen from academic institutions. Both had a fair understanding of the competitive advantage since they had been involved in either teaching strategic management or participating in transformation projects. Both had more than 25 years of working experience. Both were Muslim and, therefore had a fair idea of what *Al Falah* means. Nevertheless, when it comes to linking the relationship between *Al Falah* and competitive advantage, both experts were cautious and restrained since this concept of *Al Falah* as a factor creating sustainable competitive advantage was quite new to them. They linked the *Al-Falah* concept and competitive advantages with the “mindset”, “quality services”, “organizational resources” and “innovation” (Posen et al., 2023; Shukri & Azalan, 2023).

Both experts argued that the challenge of making *Al Falah* as a factor of competitive advantage for an organization is how can the internal staff be motivated to work towards the higher objective. In the *Al Falah* concept, the reward or success is linked not only to worldly rewards but hereafter (Alvarenga et al., 2020; Koziol-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021). The staff must always be motivated to the higher rewards and this has got to do with iman (belief). Thus, creating an

organization with a success mentality beyond worldly measurements such as profit, revenue, and market share requires a different mindset.

The concept of *Al-Falah* emphasizes that performing good deeds with the intention of serving humanity aligns with the pursuit of success in both this world and the Hereafter. Expert 1 said: *"So, if you have the mindset of doing good things for people, doing good things for the sake of attaining paradise in the akhirah, you perform your ibadah because you seek goodness. When talking about Al-Falah, it means you are doing something that contributes to serving humanity."* What Expert 1 meant having the intention to do good deeds for others, motivated by the desire to attain paradise in the *akhirah* (the Hereafter), reflects a mindset of seeking goodness through one's *ibadah* (acts of worship) (Shukri & Azalan, 2023). In the context of *Al-Falah* (success), the idea is that true success is not only about personal spiritual fulfillment but also about contributing positively to the well-being of humanity. *Al-Falah* thus involves a balance between serving Allah and serving humanity, where good actions lead to success in both this world and the Hereafter.

An infinite mindset emphasizes the importance of considering both the temporal nature of this world (*dunya*) and the eternal significance of the Hereafter (*akhirah*) in all actions and decisions. Expert 2 mentioned: *"It is the infinite mindset, exactly. We don't just focus on this dunya (world), but we also consider the akhirah (Hereafter). Whatever we do in this world is only for a limited time."* Expert 2 meant that an *infinite mindset* involves thinking beyond the temporary nature of life in this world (*dunya*) and considering the lasting consequences in the *akhirah* (Hereafter). Expert 2 is emphasizing that while our actions in this world are limited in time, they should be done with a greater purpose, mindful of their impact on both our worldly life and our eternal life in the Hereafter (Kozioł-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021). This perspective encourages living with a long-term, spiritual focus that transcends immediate or material gains.

Both experts believed that to gain a competitive advantage for an organization using the *Al-Falah* concept requires the organization's ability to be innovative and ensure superior quality services are delivered to the customers.

The concept of *Al-Falah* in Islam stresses the importance of prioritizing people's well-being and ensuring that actions, whether in business or other endeavors, do no harm to individuals or their lives. Expert 1 further argued that: *"My understanding is that if you are thinking about people's benefits or long-term sustainability, you will naturally consider what is beneficial for them. The Islamic concept of Al-Falah emphasizes that when you are doing something, whether in business or any other activity, you should think of two key principles: do not harm people and do not harm their lives."*

Focusing on improving service quality through automation and information technology can enhance an organization's reputation, even in the face of competition from larger, more visually impressive institutions. Expert 2 explained: *"It may be in your product, your services, or your human resource behavior, so that the organization is viewed more favorably by the general public. For example, Zanzibar is an island, and instead of competing against other universities with large, beautiful campuses, you can focus on improving the quality of your services through automation and leveraging information technology. This will make you better."*

Both Experts agreed that the organization's resources especially the human talents and staff need to internalize the meaning of *Al-Falah* in their work ethics.

Strengthening *iman* (faith) among organizational leaders is crucial for guiding others to understand *Al-Falah* and maintain focus on the Hereafter, especially in a world increasingly driven by materialism. Expert 1 deliberated: *"It is about building iman (faith) in the hearts of all the staff, especially the leaders of the organization, so that the leaders can then translate or transfer that iman, or try to convince people to understand Al-Falah in relation to the Hereafter. Essentially, in most organizations, whatever direction the leaders set, in sha Allah (God willing), it will be followed. If the belief in Al-Falah is not strong in the heart, then there is a tendency to disregard the Hereafter. Nowadays, what I observe in the Muslim world is that people are becoming very worldly. This world has become the main focus. I am not sure how to test this, but perhaps it is because our iman has become weak, and sometimes we even experience doubt."*

Al-Falah (success) can be defined by one's behavior and interactions with others, emphasizing kindness, selflessness, and helping others without seeking personal gain as key qualities of true success in Islam. Expert 2 emphasised: *"Falah means success. This word is also mentioned in the second Surah, Surah Al-Baqarah, where muflihin (those who are successful) refers to people who possess certain behaviors. How do you behave with others? How do you interact with others? Whether you are a driver, a worker, a teacher, or a banker—how do you conduct your work? That is Al-Falah. If you see someone and you have the ability to help them, do you help, or do you seek something in return for helping them? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that any Muslim who brings happiness to the heart of another Muslim, such as helping an orphan (yatima), is truly successful."*

The exploration of *Al-Falah* as a factor in sustaining competitive advantage for organizations, specifically through the insights of two experts, reveals a deeper understanding of how Islamic values can be integrated into strategic management. Both experts agreed that *Al-Falah*, traditionally seen as a concept of spiritual success in Islam, can be a powerful driver for organizational success when applied with an infinite mindset that balances worldly efforts with the eternal significance of the Hereafter (Alvarenga et al., 2020; Koziol-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021; Posen et al., 2023; Shukri & Azalan, 2023). The core principles of *Al-Falah*—serving humanity, maintaining faith, and prioritizing long-term well-being—encourage an ethical and sustainable approach to leadership, innovation, and quality of services.

While the experts acknowledged that the application of *Al-Falah* as a competitive advantage is a relatively new concept, they emphasized that it requires organizations to foster a strong sense of *iman* (faith) among their leaders and staff. This faith-driven leadership will guide the organization toward a higher purpose, beyond material goals such as profit or market share, and encourage actions that align with both organizational success and Islamic teachings (Alvarenga et al., 2020; Koziol-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021; Posen et al., 2023; Shukri & Azalan, 2023). The challenge, however, lies in motivating staff to internalize these values and work toward the greater good, not just for the organization but for society as a whole.

Furthermore, the experts stressed that achieving a competitive advantage through *Al-Falah* also involves leveraging modern technology and innovation to enhance service quality, thereby meeting customer needs while staying true to the ethical principles of Islam (Alvarenga et al.,

2020; Koziol-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021; Posen et al., 2023; Shukri & Azalan, 2023). Ultimately, true success (*Al-Falah*) is reflected in both the worldly achievements of an organization and its contributions to the well-being of humanity, grounded in faith and moral responsibility.

Staff of Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia

The second group of informants comprised three (3) Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM) staff. They were identified, selected, and approved by the Chief Executive Officer of YADIM. The email requesting consent was sent to CEO YADIM attached with the research questions. They were selected from different levels and positions. Three informants were selected from YADIM with different positions and roles. One was the Ahli Lembaga Pemegang Amanah (Board of Trustee YADIM), one was a Director holding a position in Research for YADIM and the other one was an Executive staff with 6 years of experience in YADIM and person-in-charge of Training for Youth with focus on students of Higher Learning Institute.

All informants have provided in-depth insight into YADIM activities and their approaches to delivering their objectives. They were cooperative and provided rich information during the interview session.

All informants agreed that YADIM, as a Federal Government agency, must employ and leverage a *collaboration strategy* to deliver its objectives. This is in line with their coordinating roles and functions. This is one of the 4 main themes identified after conducting *the content analysis* on the interview transcript. The others were “*learning organization*”, “*dakwah*”, and “*limited resources*”.

All these were important key elements that YADIM must harness and enhance in delivering its objectives. The ability of YADIM to sustain its competitive advantages against other competitors will hinge upon its ability to develop and leverage these elements.

This study has established that a strategic collaboration approach in a win-win fashion must be internalized and leveraged by YADIM since they are a Federal agency that does not possess authority on religious affairs in Malaysia. The religious affairs in Malaysia are managed, supervised, and controlled by the State Government under the purview of the State rulers. Therefore, in achieving its objectives, YADIM needs to collaborate with the State Religious Department and all the non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Dakwah is always with the authority. Informant 1 mentioned....” *We work very closely with Jabatan Agama Negeri and all the NGOs in the States. So far we did not have problems. We did a lot of collaboration*”

As organization, always facing constraints. Informant 2 said:” *YADIM has limited resources, but we always collaborate with others*”

The government is always with the organization. Informant 3 explained:: *So far we have not had any issues with the State Government agencies in conducting our dakwah activities. We work together.*”

YADIM is facing many challenges especially deviant teaching, heresy, and hedonism which refers to ideologies, beliefs, or practices that are contrary to real Islamic law or teaching. It

conflicts totally with the main sources of the Islamic religion such as the Al-Quran, Al-Sunnah, Ijmak (the consensus), and Qiyas (analogical reasoning), therefore YADIM must continuously develop their staff and preachers to be able to combat and address all these challenges that come from YADIM's competitors. The theme for YADIM to be a learning organization stemmed from this understanding.

The organization staff should be professional. Informant 1 mentioned *"Yadim staff are very professional and competent. We now have more than 300 staff. We have to keep developing our staff skills and competency in facing new challenges, especially with the advent of social media.."*

Echoing Informant 1, there is a need for briefing. Informant 2 said... *"we have weekly programs for YADIM staff every Friday morning. We invited renowned scholars to talk about current issues and also new developments. This is one way for YADIM staff to keep abreast with any new developments"*

Nevertheless, there is a need for training whether in-house or outside. Informant 3 explained *"HR in YADIM coordinates and organizes external training programs for their staff with INTAN and also with ILIM"*

YADIM was established to coordinate the activities of da'wah bodies and NGOs and conduct dakwah so that they go hand in hand and in line with national policy and become a driving force toward the spread of da'wah in Malaysia. In this study, the emerging sub-theme of doing dakwah is "reachability." and "inclusivity". YADIM has offices in all States except for smaller States in which they were combined. States such as Perlis are combined with Kedah and Malacca with Negeri Sembilan.

Informant 1 deliberated: ... *"YADIM now expanding our dakwah activities in our effort to be the reference centre of dakwah activities. We are now aggressively making relations with international bodies"... "we now have offices in all States except for the smaller state, we combined them"*

Likewise, there are other partners. Informant 2 mentioned: ... *"we are now working with IHL on this Rakan Siswa YADIM, we also now have daie in Orang Asli community, in Sabah and also Sarawak"*

Indeed, more preachers required. Informant 3 confirmed: *"we produce every year around 30 new preachers from our Akademi YADIM, they were trained for 4 months with an allowance. They became our YADIM Daie that we sent to be the Daie Community and some became independent preacher"*

Resources whether human or financial are crucial and critical in the performance of any organization. YADIM is no different from other organizations. All of the informants mentioned that YADIM has limited financial resources available to them and they have been working closely with Pusat Zakat and other Yayasan for additional funds to support their ever-increasing dakwah activities nationwide.

Dakwah requires assistance. Informant 1 explained: *"YADIM has limited funds and gets assistance from Majlis Zakat Wilayah Persekutuan in funding their programs. We have to compete with other agencies under the Prime Minister Department"*

Echoing Informant 1, funding is necessary. Informant 2 deliberated: *"... 'we need funds to help the dakwah organizations with their activities since one of the objectives of YADIM is to coordinate the dakwah activities among NGOs. YADIM did not have any authority over them, by assisting them with some funds will enable us to build trust with them"*

Likewise, not having competent people is always an issue. Informant 3 emphasised: *"challenges on human resources because dakwah works requires many peoples."*

The YADIM Strategic Plan 2022-2024 further strengthened the findings from the interview sessions with the YADIM staff.

Discussion

This study provides a good insight into the appropriateness and relevance of the Al Falah concept in creating a sustainable competitive advantage for the public sector and specifically for this study is on YADIM. The two findings from this exploratory study that are worth further investigation are that Al-Falah is about mindset and that the more appropriate views in creating sustainable competitive advantages in a public sector is the resource-based views/theory rather than market-based views/theory.

Both experts have agreed that mindset plays an important role in making Al Falah a factor in creating a sustainable competitive advantage for an organization. Mindset will determine the actions and decisions taken by an individual. This very much corresponds with the concept of Al Falah because, in the Al Quran, Allah describes the "aflaha" (Successful) in the first verse of Surah Al Mukminun and "muflihun" (they who will be successful) in the fifth verse of Surah Al Baqarah refers to the group of Mukminun" (Believers), and "Muttaqeen". (Mindful of Allah)

The motivation for creating competitive advantages in the private sector focuses on competing with competitors to gain better profit, more revenue, and bigger market shares that will benefit the organization while the public sector is more driven to deliver effective, efficient with integrity services to the public. Thus, the end game for the private and public sectors in pursuing competitive advantages hinges on the mindset. In the public sector, the motivation for creating sustainable competitive advantages must be for higher objectives, not worldly measurement.

Thus, mindset is an important element in achieving the concept of Al-Falah in Islam. With a positive, goal-oriented mindset, open to continuous learning, trust, responsibility, gratitude, reliance, innovation, and creativity, individuals can achieve holistic and balanced success in this world and the afterlife. A mindset that is in line with Islamic principles not only leads to personal success but also contributes to the well-being of society as a whole which is the aim of the public sector.

The four themes that emerged from the content analysis of the interview transcript with the YADIM staff were strategic collaboration, learning organization, dakwah/preaching, and resources. Two sub-themes from the dakwah theme are "reachability" and "inclusivity". All these themes are closely related to the resource-based views/theories of competitive advantage.

The term resource-based view was originated early by Wenmerfelt (1989) who viewed the firm as a bundle of assets or resources. Prahalad and Hamel (2003) introduced the notion of core competencies which focus on the critical category of resource which is a firm's capabilities. Barney (1991) further argued that the resources of a firm are its primary source of competitive advantage. A firm's resources can be simply classified into three categories namely physical, monetary, and human.

Based on the qualitative findings from this exploratory study, there is a possible conceptual framework model to link between *Al-Falah* mindset and the resource-based views/theories that resulted into an effective, efficient with integrity public sector as presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Grounded Framework Of Al Falah From The Findings

A company acquires its competitive advantage through various efforts. This can be achieved through a set of attributes or actions that allow it to outperform its competitors (Barney et al., 2021).

The grounded framework demonstrates how the *Al Falah* mindset, in alignment with the Resource-Based View (RBV), can contribute to achieving a sustainable competitive advantage in the public sector (Shukri & Azalan, 2023). In this case study, the public sector organization YADIM (Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia) leverages its unique services to coordinate *dakwah* (Islamic outreach and propagation) activities among various *dakwah* bodies in Malaysia. By fostering collaboration and working hand-in-hand with these organizations, YADIM optimizes its internal resources such as knowledge, experience, networks, and institutional credibility to enhance its effectiveness in fulfilling its mission (Manaf et al., 2023).

The *Al Falah* mindset, which emphasizes the holistic success of individuals and communities in this world and the hereafter, plays a central role in guiding YADIM's approach. By embedding values like taqwa (God-consciousness), ihsan (excellence), and ta'awun (cooperation) into its operations (Abdul Mukti, 2020), YADIM not only maximizes the impact of its outreach programs but also fosters a sense of unity and purpose among *dakwah* bodies (Posen et al., 2023). The organization's ability to manage and coordinate multiple *dakwah* efforts simultaneously gives it a distinctive advantage, as it operates as a central hub that aligns the objectives and strategies of various institutions towards a common goal.

From an RBV perspective, YADIM's key resources—its strategic relationships with diverse *dakwah* organizations, its deep-rooted expertise in Islamic outreach, and its recognized status within the Malaysian *dakwah* landscape—are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) (Knies et al., 2024). These resources enable YADIM to create a sustainable competitive advantage, positioning it as a leader in Islamic outreach efforts at the national level.

By efficiently coordinating efforts and sharing best practices, YADIM enhances the collective capacity of *dakwah* organizations, ensuring that its impact is not only widespread but also enduring.

This integration of the *Al-Falah* mindset and RBV ensures that YADIM remains resilient and innovative in responding to contemporary *dakwah* challenges, while continuously advancing its mission of spreading Islamic values and fostering spiritual growth across Malaysian society (Vivona, 2024).

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of adopting the correct mindset when implementing the *Al-Falah* concept as a factor in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage within an organization. *Al-Falah* is rooted in the strong belief that true success is built upon spiritual happiness, prosperity, a healthy life, and the ultimate promise and reward in the hereafter. It emphasizes striving to meet the higher objectives set by Allah (*maqasid al-Shariah*), particularly altruism and providing benefits to others. Without the proper mindset, the *Al-Falah* concept cannot generate a sustainable competitive advantage; at best, it would offer only a transient or temporary advantage. This is particularly relevant for the public sector, where the services rendered are for the benefit of society.

To ensure that the *Al-Falah* concept of holistic success can be effectively implemented in creating a sustainable competitive advantage, further investigation is needed into the mindset that must be cultivated in the public sector. This mindset must consistently prioritize ethical service, long-term benefits, and spiritual fulfillment alongside material outcomes.

The public sector must continuously enhance its capabilities to remain effective in serving the people and driving national development. In an increasingly global and dynamic world, the competitiveness of the public sector is crucial for ensuring the country's sustainability and progress. Enhancing competitiveness within the public sector will lead to the delivery of more efficient and higher-quality services, ensuring that public resources are used wisely, reducing waste, and producing positive outcomes for society.

A competitive public sector can also increase public confidence and satisfaction in government services. When citizens perceive that the services provided are effective and of high quality, their trust in government institutions grows. This trust is essential for political and social stability, as well as for fostering an environment conducive to economic development.

In conclusion, improving the competitiveness of the public sector is vital for sustainable and inclusive development. It ensures that public institutions remain relevant, efficient, and responsive to the needs and expectations of the people, while also driving innovation and economic growth.

Acknowledgments

An appreciation to IIUM Research Committee for approving my application to conduct the interview with Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia staff. My heartfelt gratitude to all five (5) informants for their patience and passion in sharing their thoughts, experiences, and information with me.

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