

# Implementation of Malay leadership Tunjuk Ajar Melayu in Political Communication for Malay Women Leaders

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## ABSTRACT

The values of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu are a cultural heritage that reflects local wisdom in various aspects of life, including in political communication. This study aims to analyze how the values of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu are implemented in the political communication of Malay women's leadership. The research method used is a qualitative approach with in-depth interview techniques and discourse analysis of speeches and political interactions of Malay women leaders. The results of the study show that Malay women leaders apply the values of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu in their political communication through three main aspects: (1) polite and persuasive language, which is used to build emotional relationships with the community; (2) the principle of deliberation and consensus, which is the basis for decision-making and building understanding in the community; and (3) exemplary moral and ethical leadership, which is reflected in an attitude of humility, honesty, and responsibility in carrying out leadership duties. The implementation of these values not only strengthens the legitimacy of Malay women's leadership but also builds public trust, strengthens relationships with the community, and creates harmonious and effective political communication. In conclusion, the implementation of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu in the political communication of Malay female leaders plays an important role in forming an inclusive, ethical, and social harmony-oriented leadership style. This study shows that local cultural values remain relevant in modern political dynamics and can be a sustainable model of political communication.

## KEYWORDS

Leadership, tunjuk ajar melayu, political communication, Malay women leader

## INTRODUCTION

Political communication is a critical aspect of the political process, as it enables political actors to convey their messages, engage with constituents, and influence public opinion (Gomes & Setton, 2016). In the context of Malaysia, a multiethnic society, understanding the relationship between political communication and cultural factors, particularly Malay cultural values, is crucial for maintaining social harmony and effective governance (Jusoh et al., 2020; Haque, 2003; Enduring Values of Ethnic in Managing Multicultural Society in Malaysia," 2020).

Leadership communication plays a very important role in shaping the effectiveness of a leader, including in the context of Malay women's leadership. As a group with its own cultural values, norms, and traditions, Malay women face various challenges in establishing their leadership in both public and private spaces.

Malay women's leadership is often influenced by patriarchal cultural factors, Islamic values, and social norms that emphasize gentleness, politeness, and respect for social hierarchy. In this context, communication becomes the main tool for Malay women to negotiate their leadership roles without abandoning their inherent cultural identity.

The representation and participation of women in political leadership roles have been a topic of increasing interest in Indonesia. Particularly in the Riau province, the interplay between political communication and women's leadership has warranted further exploration. (Anggoro et al., 2023) This research paper aims to examine the strategies employed by female political candidates in Riau, the challenges they face, and the broader implications for women's leadership in the region.

Along with the development of the times and the increasing role of women in various sectors, Malay women's leadership communication strategies continue to develop. They must not only demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively but also be able to adjust their communication style to existing social and professional dynamics. Riau province, located on the island of Sumatra, has witnessed a growing number of women vying for political office in recent years (Afandi et al., 2022). Through a rhetorical analysis of selected speeches by Indonesian women politicians, researchers have identified several key strategies used to engage their constituents. These strategies include the use of repeated words and phrases, emphasizing economic growth and development, and framing their policies and actions as essential for the region's recovery. However, the representation of women in leadership roles remains a point of contention. Despite the increased participation of women in the public sphere, the "glass ceiling" phenomenon persists, with women often being perceived as less capable leaders compared to their male counterparts. This perception is especially prevalent in rural areas, where women's physical appearance is often prioritized over their leadership abilities.

The media's role in shaping public perceptions of female political candidates in Riau is also noteworthy. The news outlet *Republika.com*, for instance, has been observed to focus more on analyzing the electability factors and political party support for female candidates, presenting a positive view of women as alternative presidential candidates. Nonetheless, research suggests that some media outlets continue to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, potentially hindering the advancement of women in leadership positions. (Latif & Manaf, 2019)

The *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*, a collection of traditional Malay teachings and moral guidelines, has long been a cornerstone of Malay culture and society, serving as a set of principles that govern personal conduct, interpersonal relationships, and societal norms. While the *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* is primarily focused on individual and communal well-being, it also holds significant implications for political communication and the dynamics of power in Malay communities.

One of the key aspects of the *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* that influences political communication is its emphasis on prudence, wisdom, and the avoidance of direct confrontation. Malay literature, which is often a vehicle for the transmission of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* principles, typically employs a more subtle and indirect approach to

addressing sociopolitical issues, favoring metaphor and implication over overt criticism. (Ishak et al., 2021) This orientation towards diplomatic and nuanced communication can be seen as both a strength and a limitation in the context of political discourse, as it can facilitate respectful dialogue but may also hinder open and frank discussions.

Moreover, the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu's emphasis on social harmony, hierarchy, and the maintenance of traditional power structures can have significant implications for political communication and the dynamics of power in Malay societies. As Malay leaders often draw upon the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu to legitimize their authority and position, the communication strategies employed by these leaders may reflect the values and principles enshrined in this cultural framework. (Alatas, 2018) At the same time, the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu's emphasis on community, cooperation, and the collective good can also serve as a counterbalance to the potential for political communication to become overly individualistic or self-serving.

In recent years, there have been efforts to reexamine the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu in the context of contemporary political and social challenges, such as the need for more inclusive and equitable governance. These efforts have sought to reconcile the traditional values of the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu with the evolving needs of Malay societies, exploring how the principles of this cultural framework can be adapted to promote more effective and responsive political communication. Overall, the link between the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu and political communication in Malay societies is a complex and multifaceted relationship, one that reflects the deep-rooted cultural and social dynamics that shape the political landscape of Malaysia.

In addition, leadership in Tunjuk Ajar Melayu emphasizes the importance of a leader being a protector and guardian for his people. Leaders are not only powerful but must also be responsible for the welfare of their people. In the context of modern politics, where personal and group interests often dominate, this value is very important to uphold justice and maintain political integrity. Good leadership is not only judged by political power but also by the ability to maintain social harmony and justice for all levels of society (Salleh, 2022).

Ultimately, Tunjuk Ajar Melayu is not only relevant in maintaining political ethics but also in resolving conflicts and maintaining social stability. The principles of politeness and mutual respect taught in Malay culture are very relevant in overcoming political tensions and conflicts between groups. These values can serve as a bridge to rebuild trust between conflicting groups and ensure that the political process continues to run peacefully and fairly (Yusuf, 2020). In conclusion, Tunjuk Ajar Melayu offers many important lessons that are still relevant in contemporary politics. The values contained in this tradition, such as justice, wise leadership, deliberation, and politeness, can be the foundation for creating a more civilized and harmonious political culture. Although the challenges of modernization and globalization often sideline these traditional values, their wise application can help build a more inclusive and sustainable politics.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach using the phenomenological method because the phenomenological method is directed to understand, describe, and interpret human life experiences because qualitative research aims to gain a deep understanding of human problems and their social environment, not to describe the surface. reality as quantitative research does with positivism.

This study adopts qualitative research because the research for this study focuses on the concept of political communication of female leaders. Furthermore, the qualitative research approach gives researchers the freedom to construct reality from data/responses of informants (when interpreting informants' views and experiences that are filtered through the researcher's understanding). Interview questions in this study were developed based on research objectives and supported by a literature review related to the research topic. This research is qualitative with an in-depth interview method. In the semi-structured in-depth interview protocol, the researcher prepares questions in the form of a planning framework. These questions become a guideline for researchers in asking questions to research subjects.

The location of this research was Pekanbaru. The data source in conducting the research was obtained from the research subjects. The subjects in this study were selected based on the research questions as a description of what data is needed by the researcher. The subjects in this study were Malay women who had held positions as leaders or who were currently leaders.

In this study, data was gathered through 1) interviews. In-depth interviews involve the thorough exploration of material in a candid and unrestricted manner, addressing issues with a research focus centered on the study's objectives. This situation involves conducting in-depth interviews using a pre-prepared list of questions. 2) Observation: This type of data gathering involves getting subjective information for the study by making firsthand observations in the field. Visits and observations using the desired achievement indicators are used to carry out the observation process. 3) Documentation. Events that have occurred are documented in the form of writing, images, or monumental works by an individual, including research-related papers, in the tourism office, letters, reports, meeting minutes, diaries, and other types of documents.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The implementation of leadership values in Tunjuk Ajar Melayu have significant relevance in women's political communication. Tunjuk Ajar Melayu, which contains advice, mandates, role models, and counsel, emphasizes the importance of traits such as honesty, courage, hard work, and perseverance. Not only do these values serve as guidelines for daily life, but they also serve as the foundation for communication and interaction, including in the political area. In political communication, Malay teaching values reflect moral teachings, ethics, and leadership principles passed down from

generation to generation. These values shaped the way Malay women communicate with society, fellow leaders, and political opponents. The primary principles of Malay education that are implemented in the political discourse of Malay women are described below.

The Tunjuk Ajar Malay leadership model, as described by Islamic scholar Abdul Rani Mahmud, highlights eight key values: intelligence, trustworthiness, fairness, honesty, hard work, religiosity, responsibility, and populism (Nugraha & Rahmatullah, 2021). These values emphasize the importance of ethical and community-focused leadership, with the leader serving as a role model and guide for the people. Research has shown that these Malay leadership values are deeply rooted in the cultural and religious traditions of the Malay community. As such, they hold significant sway in shaping the leadership practices and communication styles of Malay political leaders.

In the context of political communication, Malay women can apply these values to build a strong and integrated leadership image. For example, by prioritizing honesty and sincerity in conveying political messages and showing courage in making decisions that are in the interests of the community. In addition, the hard work and perseverance taught in Tunjuk Ajar Melayu can help women face political challenges and gain public trust.

Implementation in Political Communication of Malay Female Leaders shows specific teachings that explain the leader's character in the book Tunjuk Ajar Melayu by H. Tenas Effendy, among others:

*menjadi pemimpin hendaklah rajin,  
mau bersusah tahan berlenjin*

*menjadi pemimpin hendaklah pemurah,  
unjuk dan beri jangan berkira  
menjadi pemimpin hendaklah penyayang,  
besar dan kecil sama ditimang*

*menjadi pemimpin hendaklah pengasih,  
miskin dan kaya jangan dipilih*

*menjadi pemimpin hendaklah penyantun,  
yang muda dibimbing, yang tua dituntun*

*menjadi pemimpin hendaklah ikhlas,  
berbuat baik tak harapkan balas*

*menjadi pemimpin hendaklah terbuka,  
supaya hilang sak dan sangka*

*menjadi pemimpin baikan sangka,  
supaya jauh basat dan fitnah*

*menjadi pemimpin haruslah sabar,  
alam yang sempit menjadi lebar*

According to Malay teachings on the qualities of leaders, as previously mentioned, if categorised, Malay women leaders frequently employ a variety of implementations in political communication, such as

### **Wise and Knowledgeable**

In making decisions and communicating, leaders must consider various aspects carefully. **Deliberation and Consensus:** Decisions taken must go through a democratic process of dialogue and discussion. In accordance with the principle of deliberation and consensus, Malay female leaders prioritize dialogue and discussion before making policies. This reflects inclusive and democratic leadership. The concept of deliberation in Tunjuk Ajar Melayu plays a major role in the political decision-making process. Deliberation is not only seen as a means to reach consensus but also as a method that ensures social justice, where every individual or group is given the opportunity to participate equally in discussions. These values are deeply rooted in Malay tradition and have proven relevant in the modern political context, especially in a democratic system.

Ultimately, deliberation in Tunjuk Ajar Melayu teaches the importance of mutual agreement in achieving social justice. In politics, this means that decisions taken must reflect the interests of all parties, not just the interests of the majority.

### **Fair and Wise Leadership**

In accordance with the values of "wisdom and wisdom," Malay female leaders choose words that do not offend others and still maintain unity and harmony in society. The principle of fair and wise leadership in Tunjuk Ajar Melayu really emphasizes the role of the leader as a protector, not an oppressor. An ideal leader in the Malay tradition is tasked with looking after the welfare of his people, acting fairly and wisely in making decisions. Leaders are seen as figures who have a moral responsibility to protect and serve, not just exercise power with an iron fist. This concept is very relevant in the contemporary political context, where leaders are required to be transparent, fair, and care about the welfare of the people (Yusuf, 2020).

In the Malay context, the importance of justice and wisdom in leadership is often reflected in the proverb, "A just king, the king is worshipped; a cruel king, the king is denied." This proverb implies that a just leader will receive full support from the people, while an arbitrary leader will be rejected and opposed. This proverb also emphasizes that the legitimacy of a leader is not solely obtained from power but also from how he carries out his duties fairly and wisely (Salleh, 2020). In other expressions, the views of Malays towards a leader who needs to have wisdom in running his task. This wisdom is shown in saying and acting wisely. It is very important for a leader to have all his actions The leader will influence the views of the people led by him.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

The growing prominence of Malay women in political leadership roles has been accompanied by both challenges and opportunities in implementing Tunjuk Ajar values. On the one hand, Malay women leaders may face societal and cultural biases that can hinder their ability to fully embody and communicate these values (Irawanto et al., 2011). However, the emphasis on populism and community-centric leadership within the Tunjuk Ajar framework may also provide Malay women leaders with a unique advantage in connecting with their constituents and building trust. (Umari & Dewi, 2020) (Jusoh et al., 2021)

Additionally, the importance placed on ethics, integrity, and responsibility in Tunjuk Ajar leadership can resonate with the electorate, particularly in an era of heightened political scrutiny. One of the key challenges faced by Malay women leaders is the perception that they may not possess the same level of authority or decision-making power as their male counterparts. This can make it more difficult for them to effectively communicate and implement the Tunjuk Ajar values in their political work.

At the same time, the increasing visibility and influence of Malay women in politics presents an opportunity to further promote and integrate the Tunjuk Ajar values into the political landscape. By showcasing how these traditional values can be effectively applied in modern political contexts, Malay women leaders can help to preserve and strengthen this important aspect of Malay cultural heritage.

## **Discussion**

The implementation of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu leadership values in political communication among Malay women leaders presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, the cultural resonance of these values can help Malay women leaders connect more effectively with their constituents and build a strong foundation of trust and legitimacy. However, the practical application of these values in the modern political landscape may require careful navigation, as Malay women leaders must balance traditional expectations with the realities of contemporary political dynamics and processes.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need for Malay women leaders to develop a nuanced and contextual understanding of how to effectively incorporate Tunjuk Ajar Melayu values into their communication and leadership practices, as the specific implementation may vary depending on the local context and the individual leader's style and approach. The review of relevant literature, including studies on leadership in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as on women's leadership communication and team effectiveness, provides a solid foundation for understanding the cultural and social context in which Malay women leaders operate.

## **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of tunjuk ajar values in Malay women's political communication plays an important role in building ethical, authoritative, and community-oriented

leadership. Values such as honesty, politeness, wisdom, deliberation, social responsibility, and role models are the main guidelines in how Malay women communicate and make decisions in the political realm.

By implementing these values, Malay women can overcome political challenges, such as gender stereotypes and social expectations, without sacrificing their cultural identity. A tunjuk ajar-based political communication approach allows them to build public trust, create inclusive policies, and maintain harmony in political interactions. More than just a means of communication, the tunjuk ajar values in Malay women's political leadership also function as a moral foundation that shapes the character of a responsible and integrity-oriented leader. By upholding these values, Malay women can become agents of change that lead politics in a more just, harmonious, and socially prosperous direction.

The successful implementation of the values of tunjuk ajar in the political communication of Malay women not only strengthens their leadership but also inspires the younger generation to engage in politics in a dignified manner. Therefore, the strengthening of the values of tunjuk ajar must continue to be carried out so that they can continue to be inherited and applied in the dynamics of modern politics.

The implementation of the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu leadership values in the political communication of Malay female leaders reflects ethical, polite, and wise leadership. Despite the challenges, Malay female leaders have a great opportunity to strengthen their role in politics by adhering to noble cultural values. With the right approach, they can become leaders who are not only respected but also influential in building a more harmonious and democratic society.

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