

**PENGALAMAN TRANSISI HABITUS DALAM KALANGAN  
PEMIMPIN KOMUNITI YAMAN DI MALAYSIA: SATU  
TINJAUAN LITERATUR DAN RASIONAL SECARA  
FALSAFAH**

Nabil Mohsen Al-Bahri, Mohammad Shatar B. Sabran, Amini Amir  
Abdullah & Sarjit S. Gill

**ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini meneroka pengalaman peralihan ciri-ciri fizikal dan kontekstual pemimpin komuniti Yaman di Malaysia (iaitu pemimpin YCM) dan bagaimana pengalaman ini mempengaruhi perspektif, kepercayaan, tingkah laku dan amalan kepimpinan masyarakat dan kecairan sosial mereka. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mentafsir bagaimana pemimpin YCM mengubah taktik kepimpinan komuniti mereka dari perspektif dan tingkah laku “Sheikh Yamani” kepada peri laku kelompok bergelar Dato di Malaysia, bagaimana mereka belajar daripada masyarakat setempat, bagaimana untuk membangunkan strategi dan kemahiran mereka untuk menyebabkan berlakunya kecairan sosial dan kepimpinan masyarakat. Kajian ini juga menyiasat bagaimana pemimpin YCM membina kepercayaan diri mereka tentang keupayaan dan kemahiran untuk membangunkan kepimpinan, bagaimana mereka memerhatikan dan meniru model pemimpin masyarakat setempat. Selain itu, kajian itu cuba menjelaskan bagaimana pemimpin wanita YCM mengembangkan persepsi mereka tentang kecairan sosial. Kajian ini telah menggunakan kaedah kualitatif yang melibatkan pemerhatian para pemimpin YCM dan wawancara separuh berstruktur kepada 12 pemimpin YCM yang telah tinggal di Malaysia selama lebih daripada lima tahun dan yang telah memainkan peranan sebagai pemimpin dan membangunkan kepimpinan dalam kalangan YCM. Penemuan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa para pemimpin YCM telah mengamalkan dan mentransformasi ciri-ciri fizikal dan kontekstual kepimpinan komuniti mereka daripada norma sosial budaya Yamani dalam konteks kepimpinan masyarakat dan kecairan sosial kepada cara Malaysia. YCM telah mentransformasi gaya kepimpinan komuniti sheikh-sheikh Yaman kepada cara Dato-Dato Malaysia bahkan dipengaruhi perspektif dan amalan kepimpinan mereka. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa peralihan ciri-ciri fizikal dan kontekstual pemimpin YCM mengenai kecairan sosial dan mengamalkan kepimpinan komuniti Dato di Malaysia berdasarkan pengumpulan modal kewangan sebagai cara memaksimumkan

keberkesanan diri mereka sebagai pemimpin masyarakat. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa para pemimpin YCM melihat dan meniru model kepimpinan komuniti setempat di Malaysia. Bagi pemimpin wanita pula, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa walaupun para pemimpin wanita YCM menunjukkan perkembangan dalam persuasi mereka untuk kecairan sosial, mereka telah mencapai tahap penglibatan kerana banyak faktor. Idea ini dapat meningkatkan dan membangunkan pemahaman para pelajar dan pemimpin masyarakat Yaman tentang perspektif dan amalan kepimpinan masyarakat mengikut gaya tempatan. Majlis pendidikan YCM boleh memulakan program untuk mendidik dan melatih generasi akan datang mengenai kontrak dan pengaturan sosial yang adil dan normatif yang mewujudkan keamanan dan keharmonian dalam kalangan masyarakat Islam dan sosial yang tidak stabil seperti di Yaman. Hasil kajian ini telah menyumbang kepada merapatkan jurang yang telah ada dalam konteks teori dan amalan pembangunan kepimpinan komuniti.

**Kata kunci:** Transisi Habitus, pemimpin komuniti Yaman, Malaysia, YCM, kepemimpinan

### **HABITUS TRANSITION EXPERIENCE AMONG YEMENI COMMUNITY LEADERS IN MALAYSIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW AND PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE**

#### **ABSTRACT**

*This study explores the habitus transition experience of the Yemeni Community leaders in Malaysia (YCM leaders) and how this experience affected their perspectives, beliefs, behaviors and practices of community leadership and social disposition. The purpose of this study is to; interpret how YCM leaders transit their habitus of community leadership from Yemeni Sheikh perspective and behavior to the Malaysian Dato ones, how they learn from the local community how to develop their strategies and schemes for social disposition and community leadership. It investigated also, how YCM leaders' build-up their self-efficacy beliefs about their capabilities and skills to exercise leadership, how they observe and replicate the local model of community leader. Also, the study tried to explain how YCM women leaders develop their perception of their social disposition. The study has utilized the qualitative method that included participants' observation of YCM leaders and semi-structured interviews to the 12*

*YCM leaders who have been living in Malaysia for more than five years and who have played leadership roles among the YCM. The findings demonstrated that YCM leaders have been transiting their community leadership habitus from the Yemeni sociocultural norms of community leadership and social disposition to the Malaysian ones. YCM have been transiting from the Yemeni Sheikhs style of community leadership to the Malaysian Dato ones which influenced their leadership perspective and practices. It found that the habitus transition of YCM leaders regarding pursuing social disposition and exercising community leadership based on accumulating 'capitals' as a way of maximizing their self-efficacy as community leaders. It found also, that YCM leaders observe and imitate the local model of community leadership. For the female participants, the study demonstrated that even though that YCM women leaders show development in their persuasion for social disposition, they have achieved the level of participation because of many factors. This idea may enhance and develop Yemeni students' and community leaders' understanding about the perspective and practices of community leadership according to the local style. YCM educational council may initiate programs for educating and training the next generation about fair and normative social contracts and arrangements that create peace and harmony among the socially and socio-politically unstable Islamic societies such as of Yemen. The outcomes of this research have emerged to contribute in bridging the gap that has existed theory and practice of community leadership development.*

**Keywords:** *Habitus Transition, Yaman Community Leaders, Malaysia, YCM, leadership*

## **INTRODUCTION**

This study explores the habitus transition experience of the Yemeni Community leaders in Malaysia (YCM leaders) and how this experience affected their perspectives, beliefs, behaviors and practices of community leadership. YCM leaders' experience of community leadership had two major issues; their relationship with each other and their relationship with the Malaysian society ecological system, i.e., the surrounding environmental context. This study was designed to address this research gap by exploring YCM leaders, as participants, and experiences of habitus developmental changes regarding community leadership. This process of investigation will lead to

understanding the change and the YCM leaders' mechanisms of adapting and learning from the Malaysian sociocultural context, i.e., the micro-meso-exo- and macro-system. It will explore the factors in the local context that influence this developmental change other than religion and the process of reforming the perception of the community leader. This study has four objectives that were organized to close this gap by; (a) exploring YCM leaders' perspective and behavioral changes about community leadership, (b) understanding how YCM leaders contest for the position of community leader (c) exploring the influence of the Malaysian ecological system context on YCM leaders' habitus transition, and (d) investigating the challenges that YCM leaders are facing especially YCM women leaders.

The study has utilized the qualitative case study methodology that included participants' observations, semi-structured interviews and documents analysis to the 12 YCM leaders who have been living in Malaysia for more than six years and who have played leadership roles among the Yemeni Community in Malaysia. The first finding of the study indicated that YCM leaders have been experiencing gradual habitus transition of perspective and practice regarding community leadership from the Yemeni environmental context to the Malaysian one. The second finding of the study indicated that YCM leaders have been experiencing shift in contesting and competing for the community leadership position. They are competing for the position by accumulating resources, skills and knowledge rather than claiming biological right to it. The third finding of the study indicated that YCM leaders have been influenced by the Malaysian environmental context in many ways according to the length of time they spent in Malaysia and the level of engagement with the Malaysian environmental context. The fourth finding of the study indicated that YCM leaders and YCM women leaders have been experiencing multiple challenges as they exercise community leadership. The main challenges they face are; the homeland environmental habitus regarding the interrelations and the Islamists' interpretations of women's roles. This idea may enhance and develop YCM future generations as Yemeni students' and community leaders' understanding about the perspective and practices of community leadership become similar to the local practices. YCM educational council may initiate programs for educating and training the next generation about fair and normative social contracts and arrangements that create peace and harmony among the socially and

socio-politically unstable Islamic societies such as that of Yemen. The outcomes of this research have emerged to contribute in bridging the gap that has existed relating to theory and practice of community leadership development as well as the individuals' socialization and interrelationship dynamics.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section discusses the conceptual and theoretical basis and background of this study that leads to examining and understanding how YCM leaders conceptualized and exercised community leadership. It explores studies that followed the developmental changes and challenges of the Yemeni individuals who migrated to different environments. The purpose of that is to compare and fill the gap of knowledge regarding the transiting habitus of YCM i.e., perspective, behavior and strategies for exercising leadership in the Malaysian sociocultural environment i.e., the socialization process.

The arguments, observations and interpretations have been reviewed to enrich the discussion and interpretation of the conceptual and theoretical framework of the YCM leaders' experience. How have they been influenced by the local environment to recreate and adapt new habitus to practice leadership and to pursue social dispositions? The theoretical base of the study was established on Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological System theory and social cognitive theory as the foundation of both self-efficacy theory, as it contained the explanation of observational learning from the local environment. Theory of practice and the concept of the habitus were explored as they described the individual's practical actions and acquiring of knowledge which entails the developmental aspect through the embodiment of the structure.

The focus of the following literature review is to provide information on the literature to discuss the broad topics; habitus transition as the individual's strategy to adopt to the environmental context as well as the interrelation of development of the individuals in their persuasion to social disposition process. The headings of the literature review were classified according to the research objectives. Some classifications overlapped to clarify the interpretations and to enable the researcher to gather data sources. As this study focuses on the habitus transition of community leadership of the Yemeni community

in Malaysia, Yemeni community leaders in Malaysia have been chosen.

### **Habitus Transition and The Agency Concept**

The habitus is a system of generative schemes which permits a great deal of individual innovation. It is the source of the leaders' behaviors, ideas, thoughts, emotions and reactions in the social interactions. It controls their value systems and moral standards. The habitus is formed from the sum of all perspectives, concepts, ideas, beliefs, and dispositions. The importance of the habitus comes from the stress on the communicative aspect. This idea is similar to the developmental mechanism of the individuals as agents. Social disposition in social space is affected by the habitus that functions in producing and reproducing legitimacy and power (Bourdieu, 1977). Here comes the idea of *agency factor* that explains the persuasion of the individuals to develop his position among the contextual structure or as caste-climbing, as Bailey termed it. For Bourdieu "*Habitus is a system of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or structures of perception, conception and action*" (Bourdieu, 2002, 27-28). The transition mechanism of the individuals comes from their persuasion to develop their interrelationships in line with this context. It is the individual's process of changing and transferring attitudes and behaviors by practicing different sociocultural structures through learning, adapting, and adopting the new sociocultural structural context. It is explained as *the interplay of the agency and structure* over time which can be explained as the influence of the chrono-system. This process results in reproducing and recreating new patterns of *hybrid habitus* that reshape the practices and structures in return.

There are two studies that addressed habitus transition. Wang (2003), whose study analyzed how individuals transit their habitus to the host environmental context, discussed the transformation of the habitus of the Chinese immigrants in Germany. The purpose of the study was to explore and investigate how Chinese immigrants manage and pursue capitals in the host society which influence their homeland habitus. The study investigated and analyzed how and why they produce these outcomes as in their schemes for transformation and integration. The study objectives explored how the social agents manage to capitalize and transit their social resources as they migrate from their homeland

to the new environment with different habitus, strategies, and practices.

Hyejeong (2013) examined the transition of the habitus of immigrant Vietnamese mothers in South Korea regarding the competitive educational practices. The purpose of that study was to explore the ways they make sense of the unique educational practices of the Korean parents. The study addressed the questions by examining how the participants change their habitus toward the local community individuals' practices as well as with educational institutions. It discussed also how they change their educational strategies as a result of their habitus transition to develop new strategies for competition.

### **Individuals' Habitus and Different Ecological Systems**

To understand the YCM leaders' perceptions and behaviors, we need to have a background knowledge of the macro sociocultural structure, i.e. their homeland country sociocultural practices regarding leadership strategies. Also, we need to know about the environmental systems in Yemen as a Muslim, Middle Eastern society. The Yemeni sociocultural environment is unique, as it is the mixture that formulates the Yemeni habitus regarding the interpersonal relationship and community leadership norms. This research is addressing the issue of socialization process of YCM in the Malaysian environmental context. YCM is a micro sociocultural structure of the Yemeni Middle Eastern sociocultural environment and context where interpersonal relationships are exercised through a set of traditional rules and strategies. Yemeni society is 99% Muslim and they speak Arabic language. Yemen too is the poorest country in the Arabian Peninsula with very high illiteracy rate. Other languages such as English are spoken only in the capital's institutions and academic entities. So, the level of openness with the world is very limited. Traditionally, the society is a male-dominant one.

Hyejeong (2013) applied the qualitative research method and design to gather data in face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the respondents conducted by the researcher to examine how their changes happen through their social interactions with the native parents and the local educational institutions in daily lives. The findings of the qualitative analysis displayed that parents in educational competitive fields develop new strategies and schemes

based on acquired habitus learned from the local environment, such as individuals and institutions. This indicated that individuals set new strategies and schemes based on acquired habitus to achieve social mobility. The study's results were in alliance with Bandura's concept of personal agency which contends that individuals have "the power to originate actions for given purposes" (Bandura, 1997: 3) as well as with Bourdieu's concept of habitus. There were limitations noted in Hyejeong's (2013) study, as it was limited to the participants' experience of habitus change only within the educational field.

Wang (2003) applied the triangulation method by combining both quantitative and qualitative ways to gather and analyze the data. The findings displayed that the majority of the Chinese had been influenced by the factor of pursuing economic capital. The degree of integration into the host society was affected by participants in different fields and investing in different capitals. The study also found that the immigrants' identity went through changes and transitioned into the hybrid one due to mixed attitudes and perspectives.

### **How Individuals Build Hybrid Habitus?**

Bailey's study found that individuals in simple societies follow normative rules and strategies whereas individuals in complicated structures apply mixed strategies. Wang (2003) argued that individuals as *social agents* compete or struggle to alter their habitus to hold privileges and domination by legitimizing and converting capitals. They endeavor to be integrated into the host society by creating strategies to create and convert capital, which in return changes their habitus. Tang Abdullah (2009) viewed the Yemeni Hadhrami experience in Malaysia as one of the assimilation as a result of sharing the same religion with the Malaysian society and because of their adaptive nature. The first generation of the Yemeni migrants melded into the Malaysian society. They acquired the Malay language and adapted the local society's lifestyle and perceptions. The Yemeni diaspora community remained distinct, despite a certain level of indigenization that had taken place over the decades, through ethnic associations, clan names and intermarriages. Being of one religion, Islam, played a major role in their assimilation with the community in Malaysia. They established Islamic associations and Islamic leaderships and some cultural institutions such as Islamic teachings



schools and a number of journals as well (Tang Abdullah, 2009: 51-56).

Besides their study on press and association, the researchers discussed the immigrants' economic and cultural situation after experiencing the new environment and society. It analyzed the importance of the economic and the educational activities and the ways that the YCM used to assimilate to the new society and maintain their basic identity at the same time. The study concluded that the YCM leaders maintained the homeland cultural traditions in leadership i.e. certain family clan members dominated and dictated the decision making process in the early waves of the Yemeni immigrants to the Malay world.

#### **Individuals Interrelation with The Ecological Systems (The Socialization Issue)**

There are several studies that discussed Yemeni individuals and community members who had experienced different ecological systems in different contextual systems such as Tang Abdullah (2009); Abushouk & Ibrahim (2009); Sarroub (2005); and Jumaih (2010). The studies conducted on Yemeni individuals in Western sociocultural structures concluded that they are less influenced by the host systems because they isolate themselves with the same homeland culture and people. Other studies conducted on Arab and Muslim communities in France shed light on the same issue and concluded the same results, i.e., the socialization problem. Nasser's (2012) qualitative study discussed the experience of the Yemeni community individuals in Detroit, USA regarding the level and factors of assimilation and integration with the host society. Nasser (2012) discussed the sense of belonging to the social, cultural, and economic life of the host society. Nasser (2012) analyzed the individuals' level of interest and decision to assimilate with host communities. How were some of the Yemeni immigrants' reactions toward the US sociocultural influence? Nasser (2012) explored the factors of integration such as level of income, education, and the length of individuals' exposure to the host society's members and also how they maintain their original culture identity and interact with the host community members. The study found that Yemeni community individuals are less integrated than their other Arab counterparts such as the Lebanese. The reason behind that is the level of economic income, the education type and level, the language,

length of stay, and degree of continued attachment to the country of origin.

Studies conducted on habitus transition for individuals among new ecological contexts realized that they had been influenced by the host habitus to adjust their perspective and behavior. However, most of the previous studies, mainly Bailey's, did not provide sufficient explanation about the community leaders' concept and practice of leadership according to the Islamic norms and values such as; obedience, solidarity, serving the general welfare of the nation and *the ummah* (followers of the faith). They also did not discuss some of the Islamic leadership notions and practices like consultation, *mushawarah*, consultancy, responsibility, and trust (*amanah*). The concept of *Shura*, is one of the basic notions in the Islamic teachings for exercising leadership either within a community or in the political arena.

### **Contest for Community Leadership in Contextual Systems**

In the Yemeni socioeconomic field and politics, agenda setters and decision makers include tribal elites, religious leaders, traditional merchants, technocrats, sheikhs, and officers. Informal associations and networks are embedded in economic and political history, so the requirement for modernization and redeveloping demands changes in patronage system even though the disruption of this system is risky because the power is still vested in a small number of people. This study focused on the economic capital and the challenges that face female leadership in Yemen in the economic field, not because of the economic obstacles but because of sociocultural reasons such as the dominance of males which limits the chances of women leadership in the economic field. It concerns itself of how traditional informal social networks influence the economic and political context.

### **Community Leadership as A Social Disposition Process of the Individuals**

Most of the studies that have been conducted about Yemeni sociocultural activism focused and analyzed the subject from different point of views and perspectives. However, few studies focused on personal interrelations such as community leadership practices and norms. However, they presented sufficient discussion about the ecological environment, power relation, leadership strategies and the

notion of the capital, in pursuing leadership positions and social dispositions. Lisa Wedeen (2008) presented an interpretative study about how Yemeni leaders engage in public discussions about the socioeconomic issues. This author did intensive observations and interviews with many Yemeni social and political leaders to understand their formative practices and perspectives. The study introduces a work that increases the understanding of the dynamics of the play of the major players of the public field to examine the strategies they use in the public sphere and the state-citizen dynamics. Geographically, most of the political players who dominate the sociopolitical field in Yemen are from the north part of the country where the tribal ethics play crucial a role in the Yemeni socioeconomic life.

### **Community Leadership in Changing Contextual Systems**

Rajasekar & Beh (2013) analyzed the culture and gender in leadership in a comparative perspective and in terms of socio-behavioral norms in Southeast Asia and Middle East, specifically China, Philippines, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. In China, the study drew a comparison between the Chinese national cultural aspect on leadership and decision-making, as a paternalistic leadership style, and the western notion of leadership. It also analyzed how “face” impacts leadership in China and Malay culture and the notion of “situational leadership” which is a result of network connections as a form of social capital properties of human relations. In Korea, the study examined women leadership and the gap between the social and household leadership in a male-dominated nation. In the Middle East, as in Saudi Arabia and Oman, the study discussed the dynamics of transformational leadership, the nature of cultural values, and the impact of Islam on leadership. It discussed the current leadership environment characteristics and the nature of influence of three interrelated aspects of leadership in organizations in Oman.

The researchers concluded that leadership is a process as long as societies continue to change and that social change is a process that involves the combination of context, institutions, agents and events. The study discussed the importance of social capital such as social networks in leadership, the main concepts of leadership practice, and how the traditional networks culture still influences the concept of leadership in the Arabic and Asian socio-economic context. Some of

the studies conducted on Yemeni individuals in Malaysia including (Tang Abdullah, 2009; Abushouk & Ibrahim, 2009) did not consider the changing sociocultural environment and the transiting values. They have focused on the YCM situation but they did not include the ecological context as an influential factor on the individuals' interactions.

### **Adopting The Community Leader's Model (Assimilation to The Host Context)**

The process of observational learning is a concept applicable to leadership. For example, a Yemeni immigrant is mobilized to Malaysia, a new environment; he observes how local individuals position themselves according to the local sociocultural rules and situation. He also, observes how local community leaders behave and believe (Attention Stage). The leader remembers traditional beliefs and behavior of community leaders of the Yemeni traditional habitus (Retention). He or she acquires the knowledge and makes the comparison between the homeland habitus and the local one. The leader absorbs the local beliefs and behaviors of community leadership and social disposition through a long process known as habitus, which is a cognitive process. He or she realizes that if he or she would like to be a community leader, then he or she needs to embody new beliefs and behaviors due to the new environment (Motor Production Stage). Over the passage of years, the leaders are passing through many positive leadership experiences, learning new skills, acquiring resources of social power as accumulating '*capitals*' and updated new behaviors.

This process transit YCM leaders from sheikh perspective and behavior where the position entails social power and authority, power monopoly and domination, to chief, which has less power domination and more responsibilities. Then, it transits from chief perspective and behavior to representative which grants decision making to the community. After that, the transition is from representative to the local form of community leadership, for example Dato' which entails social prestige but with much participation, responsibility and contribution.

### **'Caste-Climbing' And 'Climbing The Ladder'**

To describe the process used by the community leaders to advance themselves socially and maximize their benefits by achieving power

and political credit to change their social positions and status, Bailey used the term “Caste-climbing”. He described how individuals pursued social dispositions in three different contexts in a comparative way. This process leads to display symbols of superiority. Leaders shall be rich and have symbolic capital or higher status. Symbolic credits like honor and religious merit are also political credits. The author tried to set a model for the game of caste-climbing according to the pragmatic rules (as rules of political maneuver) because there are no normative rules. The purposive actions of the persons in a structural social interaction was analyzed by the author and how their behavior is regulated according the environment of the political arena. Political activity is subjected to multiple factors in social interactions relating to religion, economic situation, kinship and also other political structures. They are also subject to the style of interactions between different political structures. Some social structures value honor and prestige in the competition. Bailey argued about people's ideologies about leadership in different terminology such as; honor, prestige and wealth, which refer to the same notion of ‘capitals’. He also concluded that individuals in simple peasant societies tend to deal with normative rules but individuals in more complicated contexts apply numerous pragmatic rules regarding social disposition strategies.

Bailey discussed the personal traits and skills that enable and qualify the individual to be a leader in certain communities and in certain social structures, however, the author did not clarify other factors such as social and political ones that affect the perspective of leadership. Even though the author argued that the interaction between the political structure and the environment is crucial, he did not shed light on issues such as what if an individual from a certain social structure moved into another different social structure and how such individual manages the change of the persons’ habitus and the perspective of leadership. The basic qualifications of the leader were discussed and how the economic status, symbolic capital (prestige), kinship and religion play important roles for leadership, but Bailey did not give sufficient discussion how the leaders use those capitals to peruse social disposition, power and responsibilities i.e. leadership positions. In his discussion, Bailey used the term, knowledge as a source of social power, but he did not interpret the whole idea about the cultural capital that qualifies an individual for a leadership position. However, Bailey did not explain also the role of the environmental change and the

different cultural contexts, and its influence on the political structure for both the leaders and the communities. Also, Bailey did not discuss the Islamic concept of leadership though he did some of his researches in Pakistan where the Islamic culture plays a major role on the Pakistani communities' perspectives especially for crucial issues like community leadership exercising and social disposition.

### **Yemeni Community Individuals in The Malaysian Contextual System**

The Malaysian sociocultural perspective of community leadership is based on *musyawarah* and *muafakat* in the majlis of the penghulu (village chief) and the *orang besar* (district chief). *Dewan rakyat* is the consultation setting. Shome (2002: 202) interpreted that;

*Adat remained an important link between the ruler and his people, majestic and sacred, handed down by wise men of our ancestral past. It is a norm for propriety, spirituality, goodness, ethical behavior and basis for customary law. Like religion, tradition has strands of rigidity that must be followed for moral duty or be punished by its terrifying authority.*

The type of power relation between the chief and his people are the traditions of consensus and *adat-adat kehalusan* (the customary law) which have some features of deliberation. Socioeconomic and sociocultural environments of Malaysia were influenced by the contact and communications between the society of Malaysia and other socio-political and sociocultural differences such as British society norms. Chiefs were able to learn English language and travel abroad.

According to Shome (2002: 55) That development and openness led to the Malaysians restructuring their own life-style, competing for leadership, and the traditional consultation of *musyawarah* (deliberation). Plural society served to affect the way the Malaysian chiefs' and *rakyat* formed attitude and behavior toward leadership perspectives. The *majlis* is governed by *adat* protocol and bilateral consultations. So, the chiefs had no immunity from jurisdictions or immunity from accountability if they engaged in misdeed or abused

their authority. This explains the evolution of community leadership among the Malaysian sociocultural norms of chiefdom as well as the different dynamics of decision making as group-oriented procedures rather than individual-oriented ones which resulted in a better transiting of development into egalitarian society.

Abushouk & Ibrahim (2009) collected varied researches and papers that discussed and analyzed the Yemeni Hadhrami immigrants to the Malay world. The study discussed their new social, economic and political life, the role of the economy in their life and in the life of their families in the homeland. Also, the study shed light on the role of the press in enhancing the Yemeni diaspora during that period. The researchers explained on the reform associations that played a role in cultivating the Yemeni immigrants with ideas of *Al-Amr bi Al-Ma'ruf wa Al-Nahy 'an Al-Munkar* (an Islamic concept of the role of community members who must cooperate to support good behavior and denounce the bad behavior amongst a community). The study tried to understand how the Yemeni Hadhrami community integrated in the Malay world sociocultural culture by proficiency of the language, intermarriages, and practicing the Malay culture and at the same time, preserving some of their homeland cultural values and identity.

Abushouk & Ibrahim (2009) also discussed the intellectual impact of the press, *Al-Manar Journal*, on the Yemeni Hadhrami elite in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. They did not consider the journals as a source of cultural capital but rather as information sources which is not weighted as capital. The question now arises as to how reformist programs and its influence led Hadhrami groups in Southeast Asia to question traditional authority which led to outright power struggles, for example the religious leadership, issues of education and the ensuing reformist organization known as *al-rasheed*, which were deemed social capital.

### **Yemeni Individuals as Immigrants in Different Ecological Systems**

Sarroub's (2005) study was conducted in a Yemeni community in Southeastern Michigan, USA. It explored the conflicting situation in which the American Yemeni lives and described the conflicting religious and cultural elements in school socialization and identity formation. The participants were six Yemeni-American high-school girls who struggled to find their identity between school, home, and

communities in two culturally contested worlds. The American world as they experienced in the high school environment, the religious cultural Yemeni-village world as they experienced at home, and the community in Southeastern USA all were points of divergences. The researcher ascertained that the process of education and schooling becomes "...*the production of the habitus, that system of dispositions which acts as a mediation between structures and practice*" (Bourdieu, 1977: 487).

The researcher discussed the environmental factors that influenced the participants' choices, resistance and adaptation such as culture, economics, educational politics and domestic politics which all play significant roles in such conflicting culture. These environmental factors show how the participants struggle to succeed in two contesting worlds. In an environment like United States, Yemeni immigrants face a kind of cultural racism which makes it a complicated situation in the process of forming hybrid identity practices i.e., religion and education. Sarroub (2005) discussed the environmental factors such as religion, ethnic identity, gender, language, social economic standing and school socialization norms which are different from the participants' original environment as they came from male-dominant culture. The study focused on the notion of success, the role of the participants as *the agents'* human experience in growth. It also deals with how they understand to negotiate home and school world as in academic performance and social adjustment, and the role of the participants as the individuals undergo development of identity in different contexts.

### **The Malaysian Ecological System and Its Influence On Ycm and The Malaysian Social Disposition Habitus for The Individuals and for The Social Habitus**

Researchers; Abushouk; Ibrahim; & Tang Abdullah (2009) who conducted studies on YCM individuals argued that they had gone through an assimilation process, explaining that the new host environment is also majority Muslim community. Also, the socio historical condition and events of Malaysia as a transiting nation was one factor in the process of integration and helped the Yemeni immigrant to be a competent member of the society. The significant of this study is that it seeks how to support optimal development for



YCM through education and engagement with the local institutions - either state or social ones - as influencing factors of socialization.

A study by Anthony S.K. Shome (2002) was conducted on the Malaysian community leadership traditional norms in a chronicle account method. The chief, who used to be nominated by the sultans, and mainly district chiefs, used to have social prestige and authority over his community. However, even before the Malaysian socioeconomic transition into a modern state-controlled country, the chief had not that level of domination or control over decision making because of the Malaysian *adat-adat* tradition and the *majlis* procedures. Shome (2002: 55) explained that;

*The Majlis promoted his prestige enormously as his findings on adat matters, family, religion, inheritance and customary law had profound consequences on the lives of the kampung folk. Adat protocol dictated that the sultan presided over the majlis with bilateral consultation of musyawarah (deliberation) and muafakat (consensus). The former provided a facility by which all parties in a dispute were given the opportunity to air their differences. In the latter, all decisions were made in a spirit of 'give and take' by collective agreement to which all parties were to adhere to strictly without exception.*

Another reason that the village or district chief did not use to have that much community domination or coercive force is that he had not military might as do the sheikh in the Yemeni traditional sociocultural norms. The chief in Malaysia used to exercise power, but in the limit of *musyawarah* (deliberation) and *muafakat* (consensus). Chiefs had social prestige and authority but within the limit of the official recognition of the sultan. Chiefs' duties, social power and social position may be terminated by the sultan or by the chief's death, and so, lasts only for a single generation, unlike Yemeni traditional practice where the sheikh's family becomes community leaders for many generations. The sultan had supervisory role and had the power to terminate power and authority. Shome portrayed that;

*...In a kampung setting, indigenous values such as adat-adat (custom and traditions), bangsa (race), negeri (country) and traditions of ummah were reinforced in the face of the growing presence of alien*

*cultures. These values provided the impetus for unity and a reassertion of Malay leadership. (54)*

So, when national issues and state plans were initiated by the government, all local prestigious leaders, local community members and their chiefs too became part of the socioeconomic transition.

## **CONCLUSION**

YCM leadership challenges comes from two sides; either that they are not able to communicate with the new host's ecological systems or they are not able to develop their interrelations to the community members, or to the host society community members. Yemenis have multiple identities regarding community leadership. They have multiple loyalties to the tribe, the region, the religious groupings, or field of work because the state apparatuses are weak and do not provide security to the leaders amidst the heavily armed population. The state-citizens began to realize how Yemeni leaders had earlier wielded power after they examined the absence of the security with the state structure.

The perspective of the Yemeni leaders about the power relations shifted away from the state institutional apparatus and the electoral politics. The leaders resorted to the strong loyalty to the tribe or to the Islamist groupings and both the tribal ethics and the Islamist groupings are playing major roles in the Yemeni socioeconomic life. The country's political leaders and the leading elites failed to create strong and effective institutions or electoral competition. The state also failed to initiate neoliberal economic policies. The Islamist groups' practices tend to lead by capitalizing social services and activities (Wedeen, 2008).

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*Nabil Mohsen Al-Bahri,  
Address: Yemeni Embassy, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.  
7, Jalan Kedondong  
Off Jalan Ampang Hilir  
55000 Kuala Lumpur  
Malaysia  
Email: nabemad13@gmail.com*

*Prof. Dato' Dr. Mohammad Shatar B. Sabran,  
Address: Vice Chancellor Office  
Level 2, Chancellery Building,  
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris  
35900 Tanjong Malim  
Perak, Malaysia.  
Email: nc@upsi.edu.my / shatar@upsi.edu.my*

*Dr. Amini Amir Abdullah  
Address: Jabatan Pengajian Kenegaraan dan Ketamadunan,  
Fakulti Ekologi Manusia  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
43400 UPM SERDANG,  
Selangor  
Email: amini@upm.edu.my*

*Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sarjit S. Gill  
Address: Jabatan Sains Kemasyarakatan Dan Pembangunan  
Fakulti Ekologi Manusia  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
43400 UPM SERDANG,  
Selangor  
Email: sarjit@upm.edu.my*