

Malaysia: Stop teaching patriarchal, conservative Islam, says SIS

Monday 5 September 2022, by [AZHAR Danial](#) (Date first published: 16 June 2022).

PETALING JAYA: Rights group Sisters in Islam (SIS) urged Islamic schools to stop teaching patriarchal and conservative religious values.

SIS outreach and empowerment programme officer Nurhuda Ramli said the country must find the courage to have an open dialogue on Islam to instil and popularise more progressive values.

“We must talk about Islamisation and where it has brought our society because Islamisation projects have amplified the narrative of patriarchal values and religious ideas and dogmas.

“However, we cannot expect change if we are not preaching the right teachings of Islam that are based on values, rights, justice and equality and not based on power,” she said at the launch of SIS and Merdeka Center’s survey on Malaysian Muslim youth.

Citing the survey, Nurhuda said among the 1,216 respondents, 43% somewhat agreed that men made better political leaders than women.

This, she said, suggested that the “pervasive idea” that leadership was exclusive to men continued to be taught, which contradicted the teachings of the Quran.

Commenting further, she said 44% of respondents strongly agreed that a woman should not work if her husband told her not to, adding that society had yet to debunk the narrative of an obedient wife.

“Pious women are misinterpreted as obedient women when in truth, piety should not be tied to obedience.”

She said 60% of the survey’s respondents believed that it was a choice for Muslim women to wear a headscarf but when asked through further questions, 72% said it was compulsory.

Nurhuda questioned this, saying it was a contradiction as it could not be both a choice and compulsory.

“Muslim youth have been taught that wearing a headscarf is obligatory,” she said. “This is the prevalent narrative with no diverse opinions being taught.”

Nurhuda added that the prevalence of religious conservatism and patriarchal values had made it challenging for Muslim women in society.

She said public literacy on progressive Islamic values was essential to allow the country to develop further and for women to be granted better opportunities in life and their careers.

The Malaysian Muslim youth survey was conducted by SIS and Merdeka Center between late October 2021 and January 2022, involving 1,216 Muslim youths nationwide aged 15 to 25. It seeks

to determine the wellbeing, education, economic condition and socio-political involvement of youths.

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