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MADANI PLANNING IN THE ERA OF AI: STRATEGIES FOR BALANCING TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

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Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and Malaysia Madani, a governance framework that prioritizes sustainability, prosperity, innovation, respect, trust, and compassion. The study employs a qualitative, exploratory design using inductive thematic document analysis of recent Malaysia Madani policy frameworks, official government reports, and comparative academic literature. Three core strategies are identified for balancing technological innovation with community well-being: the development of multidimensional well-being indicators, the adoption of community-based approaches in AI governance, and the design of ethical interventions that safeguard dignity and social cohesion. Definitions of Malaysia Madani planning, well-being, and AI are outlined, followed by an assessment of threats and opportunities posed by AI to social equity, cultural diversity, and democratic trust, with specific attention to marginalized communities in Malaysia. The findings suggest that embedding Malaysia Madani values into AI governance offers a unique model for aligning innovation with normative commitments to justice, inclusivity, and resilience. The paper concludes by calling for interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and systems-based approaches to ensure that AI becomes a tool for collective flourishing rather than a source of fragmentation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Malaysia Madani Values, Sustainable Urban Planning, Digital Governance, Policy Frameworks

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INTRODUCTION

The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI) with societal planning represents both a profound opportunity and a pressing challenge for contemporary governance (Gharaibeh et al., 2025). Scholars widely agree that AI is reshaping not only economic sectors and institutional functions but also the fundamental dynamics of communities and social well-being (Awashreh, 2025). While some portray AI as an enabler of progress in healthcare, education, and urban management, others highlight its potential risks ranging from job displacement and data exploitation to the erosion of civic trust (Cowls & Floridi, 2018; Goodman & Powles, 2019). In this context, the quest for frameworks that harmonise technological advancement with human-centred values has become indispensable (Lartey & Law, 2025).

Malaysia's Malaysia Madani framework offers a timely response to this dilemma. As a governance philosophy, Malaysia Madani emphasizes balance (*wasatiyyah*), compassion (*rahmah*), and inclusivity in public policy (Shuid & Mohd Zamin, 2018), seeking to align development with ethical and communal responsibilities (Balaraman et al., 2024). By embedding moral and social principles into socio-economic planning, Malaysia Madani thinking underscores that true progress is measured not only in material prosperity but also in social cohesion, justice, and dignity (Nasir et al., 2024). The intersection of AI and Malaysia Madani planning thus provides fertile ground to explore how emerging technologies can be leveraged without undermining community well-being (Setiawan, 2020).

Globally, comparable governance frameworks have emerged that share philosophical similarities with Malaysia Madani. Singapore's Smart Nation initiative incorporates ethics and inclusivity into digital transformation policy (GovTech Singapore, 2023), while the European Union's AI Act establishes a risk-based regulatory framework designed to protect fundamental rights and democratic values (European Commission, 2024). In the Global South, countries such as Indonesia and Bangladesh have begun integrating Islamic governance principles into digital policy discourse, reflecting a broader trend of aligning technological governance with culturally embedded moral frameworks (Setiawan, 2020). These international precedents affirm that Malaysia Madani's approach is not an isolated experiment but part of a growing global movement to ensure that AI serves human and community well-being.

Malaysia Madani planning refers to a governance paradigm rooted in the principles of *rahmah* (compassion), *wasatiyyah* (balance), and inclusivity (Sualman, 2025). Unlike conventional development models that prioritize economic growth as the central indicator of progress, Malaysia Madani planning emphasizes justice, ethical stewardship, and social cohesion (Zakaria & Long, 2024). It views communities not simply as economic units but as moral and

cultural collectives, where well-being is measured holistically through material, spiritual, and social dimensions (Yap, 2025). In the context of AI, Malaysia Madani planning provides a normative compass, guiding technological integration toward outcomes that protect human dignity, reinforce social solidarity, and ensure equitable participation in innovation processes.

Following the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019), well-being may be understood as encompassing both present living conditions and future sustainability, including natural, economic, human, and social capital. McGregor (2007) further highlights that well-being emerges within “social collectivity,” underscoring its embeddedness in societal structures. Building on this, community well-being is defined as multidimensional, spanning culture, economy, education, governance, health, environment, and subjective life satisfaction (Phillips & Wong, 2017). In the Malaysia Madani paradigm, well-being is not an individual pursuit but a collective achievement, demanding balanced attention to material sufficiency, spiritual growth, and community resilience.

AI, coined by McCarthy in 1956, is broadly understood as the science and engineering of creating machines capable of tasks that mimic human intelligence (Wang, 2012; Pan, 2016). Within the current discourse, AI can be categorized as narrow AI (task-specific algorithms such as image recognition and predictive analytics), general AI (hypothetical systems capable of flexible reasoning), and superintelligence (self-aware systems surpassing human cognition) (Kaplan & Haelel, 2018). In community contexts, AI manifests in robotics, big data, cross-media integration, and human-machine augmented systems (Pan, 2016). From a Malaysia Madani perspective, the deployment of AI must be critically assessed not merely in terms of efficiency or profitability but in its capacity to enhance justice, solidarity, and collective welfare (Samsurijan et al., 2024).

Global debates already reflect the dual potential of AI. On one hand, AI-enabled systems can contribute to sustainable development goals, such as reducing inequality, enhancing disaster preparedness, and improving access to healthcare (Bushuyev et al., 2025). On the other, unregulated or profit-driven applications of AI may intensify disparities, marginalize vulnerable populations, and deepen the divide between those with and without digital capital (Nizamani et al., 2025). These tensions resonate with the Malaysia Madani paradigm, which calls for technological innovation to be evaluated not merely by efficiency or profitability (Wan Mokhtar et al., 2025), but by its capacity to preserve human dignity and foster collective well-being (Iskandah et al., 2025a).

This article therefore seeks to investigate strategies for balancing technological innovation with the ethical imperatives of Malaysia Madani planning. Specifically, it proposes that sustainable adoption of AI in governance requires

three interlinked strategies: (1) the integration of well-being indicators to monitor the societal effects of AI; (2) the embedding of community-based approaches in AI development and governance; and (3) the design of interventions that safeguard cultural values while enabling technological progress (Musikanski et al., 2020). By situating Malaysia Madani planning within the global discourse on AI and community well-being, the paper argues for an interdisciplinary and systems-based approach that bridges technological innovation with normative visions of justice, balance, and inclusivity.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative and exploratory research design aimed at examining the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and the Malaysia Madani framework of governance (Tornero-Costa et al., 2023). The exploratory orientation is appropriate given that both AI and Malaysia Madani planning represent evolving phenomena whose integration has not yet been extensively theorized in the scholarly literature (Van Der Maden et al., 2023). The objective of this method is not to test hypotheses but to provide conceptual clarity and generate insights into potential strategies for balancing technological innovation and community well-being.

The primary data for this research are drawn from policy documents, government reports, and official speeches outlining the vision and implementation of Malaysia Madani. These include policy papers released by the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Economy, as well as public addresses by the Prime Minister in 2023 and 2024 that articulate the six core values of the Malaysia Madani framework: Sustainability (Kelestarian), Prosperity (Kemakmuran), Innovation (Daya Cipta), Respect (Ihsan), Trust (Amanah), and Compassion (Rahmah). Secondary data are supplemented from academic literature, international policy reports, and comparative studies on AI and community well-being (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019; Musikanski et al., 2020).

Data were collected through systematic document analysis, focusing on the most recent iterations of Malaysia Madani policy frameworks and associated implementation strategies. The analysis employed an inductive thematic coding approach, whereby documents were systematically reviewed and coded to identify recurring themes related to: (1) the role of innovation in governance; (2) ethical principles in development planning; and (3) strategies for promoting social well-being in the context of technological adoption. Initial codes were generated directly from the text of each document and subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories through iterative comparison. This coding process was conducted manually, without the use of qualitative data analysis software,

given the focused scope of the document corpus. Reliability was enhanced through reflexive review, in which coded themes were revisited across multiple readings to ensure consistency and interpretive accuracy.

The coded themes were then cross-referenced with scholarly debates on AI and community well-being in order to highlight both convergences and tensions between Malaysia Madani values and emerging international AI governance frameworks. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this methodological approach. As a document-based analysis, the findings are shaped by the framing and scope of official government documents, which reflect institutional positions rather than the full diversity of community perspectives. Additionally, the qualitative and interpretive nature of thematic analysis means that findings are not statistically generalizable. These limitations are mitigated by triangulating document analysis with comparative international literature and by clearly distinguishing between empirical observations derived from the data and conceptual propositions offered by the authors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this exploratory study highlight the critical role of Malaysia Madani planning as a normative compass for navigating the dual potentials of artificial intelligence (AI). Through thematic analysis of Malaysia Madani policy documents, three major themes emerged: (1) the need for robust well-being indicators to assess the societal impact of AI; (2) the importance of community-based approaches in AI development and governance; and (3) the design of ethical interventions that align technological innovation with collective values of justice, compassion, and inclusivity. These findings resonate with existing international debates on AI and community well-being (Tong & Li, 2024), but they also extend the discourse by situating it within the distinctly Malaysian philosophical framework of Malaysia Madani, which foregrounds balance (*wasatiyyah*) and dignity (*maruah*).

In discussing these results, it is evident that AI adoption in Malaysia cannot be understood solely through the lens of efficiency or competitiveness (Lai et al., 2025). Rather, the Malaysia Madani paradigm requires that innovation be evaluated in relation to its broader socio-cultural implications and its contribution to long-term community resilience (Hamzah et al., 2025). This section therefore synthesizes empirical insights from policy analysis with conceptual reflections from global scholarship, illustrating how Malaysia Madani planning provides both opportunities and challenges for embedding AI within sustainable and ethical governance systems.

Threats and Opportunities in the Era of AI: A Malaysia Madani Perspective

While AI holds immense promise for societal advancement, several threats emerge when technological adoption is pursued without ethical safeguards (Palakurti, 2024). Scholars warn that AI may exacerbate inequalities, undermine human autonomy, and erode civic trust if driven solely by profit-maximizing imperatives (Roy, 2021). In Malaysia, this challenge is particularly acute across three dimensions. First, the rural-urban digital divide remains a structural barrier: communities in Sabah, Sarawak, and remote peninsular areas have significantly lower broadband penetration and digital literacy rates than urban centres, meaning that AI-driven services in finance, education, and public administration risk excluding precisely those communities most in need of equitable development (Mahusin et al., 2024).

Second, low-income households and marginalized communities, including Orang Asli populations, face compounded disadvantages as AI hiring algorithms and automated credit scoring systems may embed historical biases, perpetuating cycles of exclusion rather than alleviating them. Third, senior citizens and persons with disabilities risk being structurally excluded from AI-mediated public services if accessibility and inclusive design principles are not mandated from the outset.

Moreover, the governance of AI raises significant concerns over privacy, data security, and surveillance (G. Kumar et al., 2025). Incidents in other jurisdictions demonstrate that poorly regulated AI in smart city projects can weaken public trust and provoke civic resistance (Sanchez et al., 2025). Such dynamics, if replicated in Malaysia, would conflict with the Malaysia Madani vision of respect (ihsan) and trust (amanah) as foundational principles of governance. The Malaysia Madani framework underscores that technological adoption must not undermine human dignity or compromise the moral contract between government and citizenry (Anwar, 2023).

Opportunities for Malaysia Madani Planning

Despite these risks, AI also presents substantial opportunities for strengthening the Malaysia Madani agenda. Properly integrated, AI can support sustainable development goals such as equitable healthcare, improved education access, and efficient disaster preparedness (Panteli et al., 2025). Several concrete examples from Malaysia and comparable countries illustrate this potential. Malaysia's MyHEALTH portal and the Ministry of Health's integration of AI-driven clinical decision support systems represent early steps toward leveraging AI for equitable healthcare delivery, consistent with Malaysia Madani's emphasis on compassion (rahmah). AI-driven predictive analytics could further assist Malaysia in mitigating climate change risks, consistent with Malaysia Madani's emphasis on sustainability (kelestarian). Similarly, adaptive learning platforms powered by

AI, aligned with objectives under the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025, can help address disparities in education quality, a direct contribution to the Malaysia Madani goal of inclusivity and shared prosperity (*kemakmuran*) (Jogarao et al., 2024).

From a governance perspective, AI-enabled participatory platforms can enhance citizen engagement, enabling communities to play an active role in shaping policy decisions (Yan & Qi, 2024). This aligns with the Malaysia Madani value of trust (*amanah*) and participatory governance, reinforcing democratic legitimacy. Internationally, Estonia's AI-assisted public service delivery and South Korea's smart governance platforms offer instructive benchmarks for how AI can be deployed transparently and accountably, providing Malaysia with actionable models for responsible adoption. Furthermore, AI applications in healthcare diagnostics and social welfare targeting could strengthen compassion (*rahmah*) within public service delivery, ensuring that vulnerable groups are not left behind in the transition to a digital economy (Iskandah et al., 2025b).

The Malaysia Madani vision highlights that innovation must be tempered with ethical reflection and social responsibility. Achieving this balance requires deliberate policy design, investment in inclusive digital infrastructure, and the integration of well-being indicators that measure not only technological efficiency but also social cohesion, equity, and dignity (Mohd Nafi et al., 2021).

Strategy 1: Well-Being Indicators Aligned with Malaysia Madani Pillars

A key finding of this study is that the integration of well-being indicators into AI governance must be explicitly aligned with the six pillars of Malaysia Madani. Unlike conventional performance metrics that focus primarily on efficiency and economic output, Malaysia Madani planning positions societal values as the foundation of sustainable progress (Anwar, 2023). Embedding these values into assessment tools allows Malaysia to operationalize its national philosophy in ways that guide and constrain technological innovation. The following sub-sections elaborate how each pillar translates into concrete evaluative dimensions for AI governance.

Sustainability (Kelestarian)

AI adoption must be measured by its ecological footprint and contribution to intergenerational justice (Cardoso & Rodrigues, 2025). Indicators should track how AI-driven systems impact energy consumption, waste reduction, and environmental stewardship, ensuring that technological progress does not undermine the Malaysia Madani commitment to ecological balance.

Prosperity (Kemakmuran)

Beyond GDP growth, AI governance should evaluate whether innovation enhances equitable prosperity. Indicators should assess job creation, inclusivity of marginalized groups, and fair distribution of digital resources, reflecting Malaysia Madani's aim of shared wealth and social justice.

Innovation (Daya Cipta)

While AI inherently represents technological innovation, Malaysia Madani planning calls for innovation that is ethical and socially responsive. Indicators should measure not only the scale of adoption but also the creativity with which AI addresses national priorities, such as healthcare access, food security, and educational equity.

Respect (Ihsan)

AI governance must safeguard cultural and human dignity. Indicators here include respect for linguistic diversity, religious sensitivity in algorithmic design, and the avoidance of technologies that marginalize or stereotype vulnerable groups.

Trust (Amanah)

Public trust is indispensable for AI integration. Indicators should measure transparency of algorithms, accountability mechanisms, and the degree of citizen involvement in shaping AI policies. This reflects the Malaysia Madani value of governance built upon integrity and responsibility.

Compassion (Rahmah)

AI must be evaluated for its contribution to compassion and care within society. Indicators should assess whether AI systems support vulnerable populations, enhance healthcare and welfare delivery, and uphold the ethical principle of serving humanity rather than exploiting it.

By incorporating these six pillars as evaluative dimensions, Malaysia can establish a Malaysia Madani AI Impact Framework that redefines success not only in terms of efficiency or profitability but also in alignment with moral and social imperatives. This approach transforms well-being indicators into instruments of value-based governance, ensuring that AI adoption strengthens the nation's collective identity and resilience rather than eroding them.

Strategy 2: Community-Based Approaches in AI Development

The second major theme that emerged from this study is the significance of community-based approaches in shaping AI governance within the framework of Malaysia Madani. Rather than imposing technology from the top down, Malaysia

Madani planning emphasizes the participation of citizens, communities, and civil society as co-creators of innovation (d'Elia et al., 2022). This orientation ensures that AI is not only technically efficient but also socially legitimate and ethically grounded (Mahusin et al., 2024).

Within the Malaysia Madani vision, kelestarian or sustainability requires that communities play an active role in safeguarding ecological and social balance when AI is deployed in fields such as agriculture, climate monitoring, and urban planning. Kemakmuran or prosperity is best realized when AI-driven opportunities such as digital entrepreneurship, micro-finance platforms, or smart cooperative models are distributed equitably, allowing local communities to share in the benefits of innovation. The principle of *daya cipta* or innovation is given meaning when communities are involved in designing technologies that address their own lived realities, such as rural education needs, public health monitoring, or cultural preservation initiatives (Agarwal & Nene, 2025).

By embedding *ihsan* or respect, AI governance becomes sensitive to Malaysia's pluralistic context, ensuring that systems do not reproduce cultural or religious biases but instead honor diversity and human dignity. Trust, or *amanah*, is strengthened when AI policies are transparent and participatory, with mechanisms for oversight that involve citizen input and safeguard accountability. Finally, the value of *rahmah* or compassion anchors community-based AI development in a moral commitment to uplift the marginalized, whether through targeted welfare distribution, healthcare access, or disaster relief systems that prioritize human lives. By weaving these six pillars into participatory governance, community-based approaches transform AI development into a collaborative process that reflects both technological sophistication and moral responsibility, operationalizing the Malaysia Madani vision in ways that strengthen rather than fragment the social fabric.

Strategy 3: Ethical Interventions for Safeguarding Community Well-Being

The third theme emerging from this study is the necessity of designing ethical interventions that ensure AI contributes positively to collective welfare (Avila-Robinson et al., 2025). While technological innovation often promises efficiency and growth, it simultaneously raises complex questions regarding fairness, privacy, accountability, and human dignity (D. Kumar & Suthar, 2025). In Malaysia, these concerns must be addressed within the moral architecture of Malaysia Madani planning, which calls for governance anchored in values rather than solely in technical capacity.

Three concrete ethical frameworks offer practical guidance for Malaysia Madani-aligned AI governance. First, the OECD Principles on AI (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019) provide a

globally recognized baseline, emphasizing inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, security, and safety, principles that map directly onto the Malaysia Madani values of amanah, ihsan, and rahmah. Second, the European Union’s AI Act (European Commission, 2024) introduces a risk-tiered regulatory model that prohibits high-risk AI applications threatening fundamental rights, a model Malaysia could adapt to protect marginalized communities from biased automated decision-making in welfare, employment, and public administration. Third, UNESCO’s Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021) explicitly calls for culturally sensitive governance of AI, recognizing that diverse societies require context-specific ethical frameworks, a principle wholly consistent with Malaysia Madani’s emphasis on respect (ihsan) and balance (wasatiyyah). Drawing on these frameworks, Malaysia could develop a National Malaysia Madani AI Ethics Charter that mandates algorithmic transparency, community impact assessments, and independent oversight bodies for high-stakes AI applications.

Ethical interventions extend beyond regulatory compliance to embedding kelestarian or sustainability in long-term digital policies, ensuring that environmental and social consequences of AI adoption are fully anticipated and mitigated. Kemakmuran or prosperity requires that AI be harnessed to reduce inequality rather than exacerbate it, with ethical frameworks guiding resource allocation, access to digital infrastructure, and protection of vulnerable communities. The Malaysia Madani emphasis on daya cipta or innovation reinforces that ethical responsibility should not stifle creativity but instead inspire solutions that are socially responsive and morally grounded. Taken together, these ethical interventions illustrate how Malaysia Madani values can be translated into a practical normative framework for AI governance that safeguards community well-being while enabling innovation.

Table 1: Synthesis of Results and Malaysia Madani Values in AI Governance

Theme	Focus	Integration with Malaysia Madani Values
Well-Being Indicators	Developing multidimensional tools to measure AI's societal impact on communities	Sustainability: Measure environmental footprint of AI adoption. Prosperity: Assess equitable distribution of economic benefits. Innovation: Track socially relevant technological contributions. Respect: Safeguard cultural and religious diversity in evaluation. Trust: Ensure transparency and accountability in measurement.

Theme	Focus	Integration with Malaysia Madani Values
		Compassion: Include indicators on welfare, healthcare, and social protection.
Community-Based Approaches	Engaging citizens and communities in AI design, development, and governance	Sustainability: Foster local roles in environmental monitoring and smart agriculture. Prosperity: Promote digital cooperatives and inclusive entrepreneurship. Innovation: Co-create solutions for education, health, and cultural preservation. Respect: Protect diversity through participatory design. Trust: Build oversight mechanisms with citizen input. Compassion: Design AI for healthcare, welfare, and disaster relief.
Ethical Interventions	Embedding moral values into regulatory and governance frameworks	Sustainability: Align AI policy with long-term ecological and social goals. Prosperity: Use AI to reduce inequality, not widen gaps. Innovation: Encourage creative yet ethically grounded AI applications. Respect: Prevent algorithmic bias against cultural and religious identities. Trust: Strengthen transparency, accountability, and integrity in governance. Compassion: Prioritize public good, welfare services, and inclusive protection.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into governance through the normative framework of Malaysia Madani. By focusing on well-being indicators, community-based approaches, and ethical interventions, the analysis demonstrates that technological innovation cannot be meaningfully pursued without anchoring it in values that safeguard human dignity and collective resilience. The six pillars of Malaysia Madani, namely sustainability (kelestarian), prosperity (kemakmuran), innovation (daya cipta), respect (ihsan), trust (amanah), and compassion (rahmah), provide both conceptual clarity and practical guidance for evaluating AI's societal impact.

Together, they offer a framework that moves beyond efficiency and competitiveness, situating AI within a broader moral and cultural horizon.

The findings underscore that Malaysia is uniquely positioned to pioneer a value-driven model of AI governance, one that balances technological advancement with the preservation of social cohesion and ethical responsibility. In this sense, Malaysia Madani planning in the era of AI is not only a national strategy but also a potential contribution to global debates on how to align innovation with the pursuit of human and community well-being.

Several directions for future research emerge from this study. First, empirical research employing mixed-methods designs, combining community surveys, policy evaluations, and longitudinal data, would help validate and refine the Malaysia Madani AI Impact Framework proposed here. Second, comparative studies examining how other Muslim-majority nations integrate faith-based governance principles into digital policy could illuminate both the universality and contextual specificity of the Malaysia Madani approach. Third, participatory action research engaging marginalized communities, including rural populations, the urban poor, and persons with disabilities, would ground future frameworks in lived experience rather than policy discourse alone. Finally, the development of standardized, measurable well-being indicators aligned with the six Malaysia Madani pillars represents a pressing practical priority for researchers, planners, and policymakers working at the intersection of AI governance and sustainable development.

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