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Rethinking Islamic Leisure from Market Islam/L'Islam de Marché: Development of Moral Communication in the Neoliberal Piety

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Abstract

From the beginning of the 21st century, a new lifestyle based on Islamic principles has been widely accepted among Muslim communities worldwide. This new 'Islamic lifestyle market' illustrates the transformation of the social life of contemporary Muslims. With the international development of the Islamic lifestyle market, various researchers have conceptualised Islamic leisure and lifestyle regarding consumer behaviour and marketing analysis.

However, the development of the social context of leisure in the contemporary Islamic lifestyle market has not been considered in previous studies. Instead, recent studies in Islamic lifestyle have posited the significance of the conceptual framework of 'market Islam' to locate market practices and marked design of Islamic leisure in the social context embedded in contemporary Islamic lifestyles. Therefore, the social context of the Islamic leisure market should be considered in contemporary Muslim societies from the perspective of the 'market Islam' framework in the article.

In conclusion, the article notes that the development of the Islamic leisure market has promoted moral communication through market practices among stakeholders. This is the creation of a new Islamic moral sphere in which individual leisure practices have strongly contributed to enhancing the morality and social welfare in recreation and entertainment activities in various fields.

I. Introduction

From the beginning of the 21st century, a new lifestyle based on Islamic principles has been widely accepted among Muslim communities worldwide. This new 'Islamic lifestyle market' illustrates the transformation of the social life of contemporary Muslims according to the development of modern capitalism and market practices (Pink ed., 2009; Sandıkcı and Rice eds., 2011; Temporal, 2011; Alserhan, 2015; Melewar and Alwi eds., 2017). Various industrial reports show that the aforementioned market has rapidly grown regarding entertainment and leisure activities, such as TV drama and programs, music, live performance, fashion and

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cosmetics, and the tourism industry (Dinar Standard, 2020; Crescentrating and Mastercard, 2021). Furthermore, *State of the Global Islamic Economy 2019/2020* by Dinar Standard describes this rapid worldwide growth and estimates continued development despite the recent economic recession resulting from COVID-19 (Dinar Standard, 2020). In this social environment, compatibility between Islam and economics has emerged as a new Islamic lifestyle, and the privatisation of property and market-friendly avenues for investments and entrepreneurialism is pursued through Islamic economic practices (Tobin, 2016: 20). This market has strongly influenced individual piety and related industries in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and non-OIC countries (Dinar Standard, 2020).

Regarding leisure activities, the development of halal, Muslim-friendly, and shariahcompliant tourism and entertainment, as well as Islamic hospitality towards Muslim tourists have actively encouraged travel, and radically changed the landscape of tourism destinations and international industries (SESRIC, 2016, 2017, 2020; Crescentrating and Mastercard, 2021). The *Global Muslim Travel Index 2021* illustrates the rapid worldwide growth of the Islamic tourism and leisure market, and how they have become essential activities in daily living (Crescentrating and Mastercard, 2021). Recognising the market's potential, stakeholders have also encouraged the promotion of local Muslim cultural experiences through the conservation of tangible and intangible Islamic heritage to diversify their offered market experiences.

With the international development of the Islamic leisure market, various researchers have conceptualised Islamic leisure and lifestyle regarding consumer behaviour and marketing analysis (Pink ed., 2009; Sandıkcı and Rice eds., 2011; Temporal, 2011; Jafari and Scott, 2014; Alserhan, 2015; Izberk-Bilgin and Nakata, 2016; Melewar and Alwi eds., 2017; Jamal and el-Bassiouny, 2018; Battour, 2019). Compared to the conventional mass leisure industry, Islamic leisure had to confront its religious legitimacy and how stakeholders and their customers recognise leisure practices that reflect Islamic values.

As the market for Islamic lifestyle and leisure is based on consumer demands and satisfaction according to analysis and Muslims' consumer behaviour, its design focuses on whether each product, service, and infrastructure reflects market standards such as shariah-compliance and halal guidelines to attract consumers (Henderson, 2010; Stephenson *et al.*, 2010; Duman, 2012, 2020; Stephenson, 2014; Murzuki *et al.*, 2020; Razak *et al.*, 2020). Various stakeholders follow the motivational approach and use emerging market standards to ensure Islamic legitimacy by reflecting their products, services, and infrastructures within provided guidelines (Duman, 2012; Othman *et al.*, 2015: 7), and stakeholders recognise that "for a tourism product(s) and/or activities to be halal, it should have full compliance with the rules and guidance of shariah and halal" (el-Gohary, 2016: 127).

However, the development of the social context of leisure in the contemporary Islamic lifestyle market has not been considered in previous studies. As Reader (2013) indicates in a

study in the case of contemporary pilgrimage in the world, "pilgrimages are embedded in the context of markets, consumer activity, publicity, and promotion, and how they operate not just in the marketplace but through it" (Reader, 2013: 8). He also notes that "pilgrimage is located in and operates through the marketplace, and it is through the mechanisms of the marketplace that constructs such as the sacred are materialised and successful pilgrimage sites emerge" (Reader, 2013: 195). Moreover, Kitiarsa (2010) indicates that a highly dynamic market economy and religion convergence is created through market mechanism, technological advancement, and global flows of people, capital, and information, including religious symbols and institutions (Kitiarsa, 2010: 564). These notions indicate that religiosity and piety are embedded in the social environment, and contemporary religious practices are strongly connected with the market economy.

Hence, the concepts of sharia-compliance and halal guidelines are also embedded in contemporary Islamic lifestyles and surrounding social environment like globalisation and modern capitalism. As Johan Fischer and Jérémy Jammes note, the concept of economy has been "re-constructed by diverse Muslim groups, ranging from the personal and the national to the global, and Islamic identities are transforming as a result of these entanglements with the economy" (Fischer & Jammes, 2020: 1). Therefore, the development of sharia-compliance and halal guidelines in the Islamic leisure market is considered a part of the reform of individual piety and social morality embedded in contemporary social environment, instead of marketing analysis and consumer behaviour (Eid and el-Gohary 2015; el-Gohary 2016).

Hence, some studies have posited the significance of the conceptual framework of 'market Islam,' or *l'islam de marché*, to locate market practices and marked design of Islamic leisure in the social context embedded in contemporary Islamic lifestyles (Haenni, 2005; Rudnyckyj, 2011, 2018; Tobin, 2016; Osella and Rudnyckyj, 2017; Sloane-White, 2017; Fischer and Jammes, 2020). This concept has crucially contributed to the development of ethical and social objectives in the process of market practices through its market philosophy beyond shariah compliance and halal guidelines.

Hence, the social context of the Islamic leisure market should be considered in contemporary Muslim societies from the perspective of the 'market Islam' framework. Focus is placed on clarifying the traditional Islamic context of the leisure concept, its contemporary social meaning in market practices.

The methodology of this article is based on the theoretical research on Islamic leisure, Islamic marketing and Islamic economics. The articles on these academic fields are the main resource of this article.

II. Islamic Leisure and its Traditional Context

There is no exact concept of 'leisure' in the Islamic context to match that of modern Western

society (Ibrahim, 1982; Martin and Mason, 2003, 2004; Sudjatmiko *et al.*, 2018). Leisure is connected with 'free time,' 'relaxation,' and 'quality of experience' in opposition to 'working time,' which ties deeply into individual lifestyles, values, and ethics based on free will (Heintzman, 2015, 2016, 2000, 2021; Iwasaki, 2017; Stebbins, 2017a). In this labour/leisure dichotomy, leisure's main function is to refresh and rehabilitate the body to conduct proper labour (Iwasaki, 2017; Stebbins, 2017a). Moreover, recent discussions in leisure studies show that spiritual fulfilment and physical refreshment are more important in enhancing individual quality of life experiences (Heintzman, 2015, 2016, 2020, 2021). As Paul Heintzman indicates, leisure activities have contributed to improving spiritual well-being to promote a better life (Heintzman, 2016).

However, the concept of leisure in Islamic and Western contexts are different, based on the labour/leisure dichotomy and individual free will (Ibrahim, 1982; Martin and Mason, 2003, 2004; Sudjatmiko, et al., 2018). From an Islamic perspective, while the dichotomy of 'amal (labour) and '*ibāda* (worship) is considered for the development of life experiences, wherein "work and worship are two of the matters loved by God, while mata' (pleasure) and faragh (free time) are two matters he loathed" (Sudjatmiko et al., 2018: 91). Some researchers show that Islam might oppose the leisure activities of the West due to the absence of a corresponding concept in the Qur'an and hadith. Others have begun to construct the concept based on the quotations of the Qur'an, hadith, and adab (Islamic etiquette) literature, which have similar concepts such as farāgh (free time, or empty), tarfīha (relaxation), tarfīh (recreation), and matā' (pleasure) (Ibrahim, 1982; Martin and Mason 2004; Sudjatmiko et al., 2018). Sudjatmiko et al. (2018) are among the former researchers, as they argue that the leisure is negatively perceived by connecting it with momentary pleasure (matā) and emptiness (farāgh) in the Qur'an and hadith. For instance, some verses in Qur'an and hadith passages show a negative evaluation of leisure, such as "when you have finished (your duties), stand up (for worship). And to your Lord direct (your) longing" (94: 7-8), or "there are two blessings that many people are deceived into losing: health and free time" (hadīth in Ṣaḥīh al-Bukhārī), "take advantage of five before five: your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your riches before your poverty, your free time before your work, and your life before your death" (hadīth in Shu'ab al-Īmān). Moreover, some Arabic proverb shows that "youth with free time and wealth will destroy a person with the ultimate damage" (Sudjatmiko et al., 2018: 91). Hence, leisure is often connected with laziness and wasting of free time (Ibrahim, 1982; Sudjatmiko et al., 2018: 91).

Despite this negative attitude toward leisure in the Western sense, Islamic researchers have shown evidence of a positive attitude towards other forms of leisure in the Qur'ān, $had\bar{t}th$, and *adab* literature based on the concepts of hospitality (*diyāfa*) and entertainment (*karam* or *malāhī*) (Ibrahim, 1982; al-Atawneh, 2012; Martin and Mason, 2003, 2004; Stephenson,

2014). As Ibrahim (1982) shows, some *hadīth* passages state, "recreate your hearts hour after hour for the tired hearts go blind" (*hadīth* in *Musnad Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal*) (Ibrahim, 1982: 200). Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī indicates the merit of leisure in his book *The Revival of Religious Science (Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*), by stating that "the first benefit (of seclusion) is that a person can have sufficient leisure for divine service and deep contemplation of Allah's glory" (al-Ghazālī, 2015: 191). Moreover, Ibrahim (1982) and other researchers show that Islamic societies have rich local cultures of entertainment, such as television dramas and sports, as well as cultural traditions of poetry, song, music, and dancing.

Thus, they note that Islamic societies have developed appropriate entertainment and leisure activities to enhance their lifestyle and Islamic ethics, and this form of leisure is not opposed to Islamic principles (Ibrahim, 1982; Stebbins, 2017b; Sudjatmiko *et al.*, 2018). Al-Atawneh (2012) shows a positive perspective toward leisure involving entertainment (*malāhī*): "contemporary Muslim scholars recognise that *malāhī* is a vital human need, necessary even for the proper practice of religious duties" (al-Atawneh, 2012: 412), and Stebbins (2017b) notes the rich leisure culture in Middle Eastern countries. Hence, leisure is recognised as essential to the Islamic way of life, and philosophy has encouraged people to engage in hospitality culture and entertainment activities to enhance their religiosity, ensuring that their activities are consistent with Islamic values.

While the Western concept of leisure strongly focuses on private involvement for physical and spiritual fulfilment in the labour/leisure dichotomy, leisure in the Islamic context emphasises social interactions, connecting with *'ibāda* (worship) (Sudjatmiko *et al.*, 2018: 90, 107). Various verses in the Qur'ān, *hadīth*, and *adab* literature indicate the religious significance of social interactions in free time, such as the invitation to one's home that promotes communication and strengthens ties (al-Ghazālī, 2015). Moreover, Islamic tradition has formed the philosophy and practical norms for hosts and guests, named *diyāfa* (hospitality), to promote social interactions among family, relatives, and friends, thus encouraging social communication. These verbs in Qur'ān, *hadīth* and *adab* literatures show the religious significance of social interactions, and leisure is also a space to reaffirm and reproduce Islamic beliefs (Sudjatmiko *et al.*, 2018: 107). Hence, Islamic leisure strongly focuses on social interaction rather than individual fulfilment through entertainment and recreation activities, which are connected to religious worship to some extent.

III. The Concept of 'Market Islam' in Contemporary Islamic Lifestyle

While Islamic leisure is strongly focused on communication in leisure activities to enhance social interactions and ties based on religious worship, previous studies focused on individual preferences and behaviours in market practices, which lack social meaning and context in the Islamic lifestyle. Hence, some researchers focus on the 'market Islam' concept to consider the social meaning and context in market practices.

The 'market Islam' framework is conceptualised among researchers as alternative ways to Islamic societies compared to political Islam (Haenni, 2005; Rudnyckyj, 2011, 2018; Tobin 2016; Osella and Rudnyckyj, 2017; Sloane-White, 2017; Fischer and Jammes, 2020). As Patrick Haenni first summarised the concept of 'market Islam' (*l'islam de marché*), Muslims have emerged with new social norms and lifestyles in the era of capitalism and neoliberalism through an Islamic lens and with orthopraxical concerns, which can be summarised as an emergence of a new social class seeking 'self-realisation' and 'individual well-being' in their everyday lifestyle (Haenni, 2005; Sloane-White, 2017: 3).

Thus, researchers conceptualise 'market Islam' as pious neoliberalism with new institutions, systems of knowledge production, and subjectivities (Atia, 2013: xvi–xviii), as well as "notions of freedom, individual choice, liberty, the cultural normalization of an Islamic identity, and modernity" (Haenni, 2005; Bayat, 2007: 7). In fact, "Muslim markets in terms of Islamic lifestyle and 'Islamic neoliberalism' — a transformation both of religious practices modalities of capitalism representing a new compatibility between business and piety as a result of the ways in which religion and the economy interact in the contemporary moments" (Fischer and Jammes, 2020: 3).

Hence, the idea of 'market Islam' can also be reformulated "in terms of an (in) compatibility between Islam and the economy, which manifests as constant debates about why/how Islam and the economy are compatible or not" (Fischer and Jammes, 2020: 2). As some researchers note, this concept reconciles "personal piety on the one hand with matters of money and personal finance on the other" (Tobin, 2016: 3), or "entailed combining personal growth, life-coaching, and human resources principles with Islamic practice to provide a design for middle-class Muslim lives" (Rudnyckyj, 2011: 93).

Under this construct, 'market Islam' focuses on the modalities of economic activities and religious practices to consider how individual economic practices and market forms elicit specific, and sometimes new, moral dispositions and religious configurations, and how religious moralities frame contemporary economic practices through ethnographic studies (Osella and Rudnyckyj, 2017; Fischer and Jammes, 2020: 6). Some researchers conceptualise this framework from individualised piety based on neoliberalism, which produces a sense of shortcoming and a desire for economic and spiritual profits, rewards, and gains for a greater expansion into new spaces and markets (Schielke and Debevec eds., 2012: 142; Tobin, 2016: 6). To maximise spiritual merits, people should engage in a careful cost-benefit analysis of their practices to secure their livelihood and strengthen their religiosity (Osella, 2017: 227). As Daromir Rudnyckyj and Filippo Osella indicate, "the materiality of religiosity and of morality, and the affective underpinnings of the market lead us to consider relationships among dispositions, habituations, aesthetics and affects, that is, economies of morality, that are produced — contingently and haphazardly — by particular modalities of economic and religious practices under regimes of neoliberal reform" (Osella and Rudnyckyj, 2017: 12). Hence, 'market Islam' indicates "a set of ascetic practices that involve individual ethical reform conductive to neoliberal values, such as transparency and accountability" (Rudnyckyj, 2011: 134).

However, this personalised piety has also promoted the socialisation of morality through market practices. Various studies show the development of morality through this neoliberal market practice, which Sarah Tobin states as "highly compatible with Islamic ethics, which deem Islam a religion of equity, fairness, and hopeful promise for individual" (Tobin, 2016: 8). In fact, "organised religion suggests that an appropriately moralised market could (and should) become the means for the realization of ethical values compatible with religious injunctions for social justice" (Osella and Rudnyckyj, 2017: 2; Fischer and Jammes, 2020: 2). As 'market Islam,' or spiritual economy, promoted a set of ascetic practices based on neoliberal values, this 'market Islam' framework seeks to reform Islamic favoured profit-sharing instruments with mutual bonds and partnership relationships, in contrast to the individualising tendencies of liberalism (Rudnyckyj, 2011: 134, Rudnyckyj, 2017: 173).

Hence, the 'market Islam' concept can be summarised as the emergence of new moral dispositions and religious configurations among stakeholders regarding a new Islamic lifestyle, or morality ($akhl\bar{a}q$), social responsibility ($fard al-kif\bar{a}ya$), and public interest (maslaha) through the interactions among stakeholders. Studies on it strongly emphasise the development of the aforementioned factors through market practices under capitalism and neoliberalism in Muslim societies (Tobin, 2016).

IV. Market Practices as Moral Communication in Islamic Cultural Sphere

The 'market Islam' framework clarifies the development of social morality under personal neoliberal piety through market practices. This paradoxical concept shows that market exchange in the Islamic lifestyle market is related to goods and money and some intangible value through micro-level market practices. Although the studies on Islamic economics indicate this intangible value as morality, which is described as ethics (*akhlāq*), social responsibility (*fard al-kifāya*), or public interest (*maşlaḥa*) (Chapra, 2000; Tripp, 2006; Asutay, 2012), its social meaning and context in the Islamic leisure market is not precisely considered. As various researchers imply, the social function of market exchange in Islamic leisure is not limited to the exchange of goods and money; rather, it strongly contributes to enhancing morality and social meanings in the market and in everyday life.

Morality in market exchange is frequently discussed in anthropology and sociology by showing the exchange as a communication practice among people and society. As Malinowski conceptualised the social function of ceremonial exchange called 'Kula ring' in Trobriand Islands (Malinowski, 2013 [1922]), or Mauss developed the concept as 'gift exchange' based on reciprocity (Mauss, 2001 [1924]), the exchange of goods also confirms various social norms and values among the actors, which can be summarised as 'communication' in the market practice. As Niklas Luhmann conceptualised in his social systems theory (Luhman, 1996), market exchange is described as a communication function to create social systems by confirming various social norms and values behind the practice and fostering trust in society (Luhman, 1996, 2017). Hence, in modern capitalism, it is also described as communication to reflexively confirm social norms and values in the market system.

Communication is the fundamental function of market exchange to foster a certain social system through the exchange of social norms and values. As the discussion on communication function expanded, researchers have started focusing on the perspective of the 'public sphere' in Islamic leisure activities. For instance, van Nieuwkerk indicates that the development of leisure activities in Muslim societies encouraged the expansion of an 'Islamic cultural sphere' or 'Islamic cultural public sphere' through "the growing influence of Islamic sensibilities in the public space" by the leisure activities (van Nieuwkerk, 2008: 174). Furthermore, van Nieuwkerk shows that the development of religious entertainment and recreation activities creates a new form of 'public sphere' in Harbermas's sense. Engaging in these cultural spheres encourages people to transform their dispositions and tastes, or 'habitus,' in an Islamic way. Therefore, piety is about the construction of distinctive lifestyles of new religious tastes and preferences through experiences in the cultural public sphere (van Nieuwkerk, 2008: 172). Regarding this, personal pious sensibilities have become a driving force in the creation of new forms of artistic expressions and leisure activities (van Nieuwkerk, 2008: 169). Consequently, the development of these newly formed public spheres has encouraged people to consider the possibility of new voices to express new ideas and transform contemporary Muslim social life (van Nieuwkerk, 2008, 2013; Stephenson, 2014; van Nieuwkerk et al. eds., 2016).

Thus, Islamic leisure is cultivating new incentives based on stakeholders' social communication and interactions in market practices which can be called the Islamic cultural sphere. Moreover, van Nieuwkerk clarified the social meaning and context of leisure and entertainment activities from the Muslim narratives and practices in her field research in Egypt and showed the development of Islamic morality among Egyptian people (van Nieuwkerk, 2013). The development of lifestyle markets such as entertainment and leisure activities in Egyptian society actively encouraged communication and debates about it in entertainment and leisure regarding Egyptian Islamic society. Market practices also enhanced moral communication among people and society.

Lara Deeb and Mona Harb, while examining the moral communication of Islamic leisure in a case study of Southern Beirut in Lebanon, noted that emerging religious entertainment and recreation activities promote "a feeling related to shared sensibilities about appropriate morals and social behaviour, perceptions of class congruity, a sense of security linked to safety from physical and verbal harassment and territorial belongings" (Deeb and Harb, 2013: 9). The physical and spiritual comfort provided by Islamic leisure is achieved through social interactions while engaging with Islamic axioms and principles in the cultural public sphere, which offer various benefits to mundane life, and in the afterlife.

Although people's active engagement through moral communication and social interactions in the Islamic leisure market as a cultural sphere is recognised as the Islamisation of Muslim societies and Muslims in the contemporary world, the development of Islamic leisure can alternatively be described as the transformation of axioms and principles derived from the Islamic order (van Nieuwkerk, 2008, 2013; Alagha, 2011; Deeb and Harb, 2013; Stephenson 2014; van Nieuwkerk *et al.* eds., 2016; Fischer and Jammes, 2020). Hence, the development of an Islamic cultural sphere as the Islamic leisure market could enhance the moral sphere in Muslim lifestyles through moral communication and social interactions in market practices.

Regarding this, Islamic leisure is described as an emerging new public sphere that enhances morality and social welfare through engagement with market practices as moral communication practices. The Islamic leisure market has encouraged leisure practices with *'ibāda* (worship) by promoting moral communication in market practices. Therefore, the contemporary Islamic lifestyle is contextualised as a strong connection between worship, labour, and leisure through market practices.

V. Conclusion

This article examines the social context of the Islamic leisure market in contemporary Muslim communities from the perspective of the 'market Islam' concept.

In the traditional Islamic context, there is no concept of 'leisure' to match that of modern Western society, which is accepted globally. The Islamic context has a negative attitude towards the labour/leisure dichotomy and individual lifestyles, and leisure is not connected with the dichotomy. However, leisure in Islam is connected with *'ibāda* (worship) and *'amal* (labour), which promote social interactions among family, relatives, and friends by conducting recreational and entertainment activities to enhance social bonds, ties, and trust in Muslim societies.

Hence, the contemporary social context of the Islamic leisure market is described as moral communication through the vitalisation of the 'Islamic cultural sphere.' 'Market Islam' is described as a driving force for emerging new moral dispositions and religious configurations among stakeholders regarding 'Islamic lifestyle,' morality (*akhlāq*), social responsibility (*fard al-kifāya*), and public interests (*maslaḥa*). This means that ethical and social objectives and responsibility for human and social well-being are met through market practices regarding the

'market Islam' concept. Researchers have clarified that various social innovations and reforms have emerged by activating the Islamic leisure market, and its social impacts have spread through various industries which have affected and transformed the Islamic lifestyle.

Therefore, the development of the Islamic leisure market has promoted moral communication through market practices among stakeholders. This is the creation of a new Islamic moral sphere in which individual leisure practices have strongly contributed to enhancing the morality and social welfare in recreation and entertainment activities in various fields. The development of Islamic leisure has enhanced its management and governance, thus promoting stability and sustainability in the Islamic lifestyle.

Finally, this paper indicates a theoretical framework in which Islamic leisure is one of the best examples when considering emerging social lifestyles beyond contemporary capitalism. The development of the 'market Islam' framework implies the possibility of an Islamic lifestyle and economy. Although this article clarifies some conceptual frameworks, empirical studies using qualitative and quantitative approaches are needed. The accumulation of empirical case studies will contribute to enhancing conceptual models and discussions on Islamic leisure and lifestyle. Hence, Islamic leisure is not limited to the consumer behaviours of Muslim consumers, as previous studies have emphasised; rather, it is described as a market based on Islamic values, to which non-Muslims and Muslims make a crucial contribution. Specifically, the Islamic leisure market shows an alternative approach to leisure and a market philosophy to overcome contemporary capitalism, which, in principle, is unstable and unsustainable. Hence, the development of Islamic leisure and lifestyle studies does not limit the understanding of Islam and Muslim societies but contributes to showing future capabilities. Thus, this frontier of Islamic leisure has the potential for developing further studies and discussions in the field.

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