

THE EFFECTS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION ON RELIGIOSITY AMONG *MUALLAF* STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

^{*1}Azarudin Awang, ²Azman Che Mat, ³Razali Musa & ¹Ruhaizah Abdul Ghani

¹ Contemporary Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
UiTM Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia.

² Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
UiTM Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia.

³ Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies (FKI), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin,
21300 Terengganu, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author: azaru154@uitm.edu.my

Received: 14.10.2022

Accepted: 29.01.2023

ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: Islam is a way of life that must be practised in all areas of Muslims' lives. Thus, Islamic education should be developed in the community of its people beginning at the early stage of childhood. Religiosity is related to the effectiveness of education obtained by a person. *Muallaf* is a group of people who have just embraced Islam and need to be guided and educated so that they can truly practice the teachings of Islam. This study aims to explain the effectiveness of Islamic education on the Islamic religiosity of *Muallaf*.

Methodology: This qualitative study used an interview approach on 25 *Muallaf* from five zones: the North Zone (Kedah), East Coast (Terengganu), West Coast (Selangor), South (Johor), and Sabah (East Malaysia). In addition, interviews were conducted with four figures who are directly involved in the management of *Muallaf*.

Findings: The study's results highlighted several aspects emphasized in the Islamic education of *Muallaf*, including the basics of faith, prayer education, implementation of fasting, reciting the Qur'an, and issues concerning Islamic behavior. *Muallafs* need to spend a certain period improving themselves as true Muslims.

Contribution: This study's results are significant in disclosing the real situation of *Muallaf* in Malaysia and providing information to certain parties to conduct further research.

Keywords: Islamic education, religiosity, management, *Muallaf*.

Cite as: Awang, A., Che Mat, A., Musa, R., & Abdul Ghani, R. (2023). The effects of Islamic education on religiosity among *Muallaf* students in Malaysia. *Journal of Nusantara Studies*, 8(1), 290-309. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol8iss1pp290-309>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Religiosity is an important aspect for human beings due to its great influence on behavior, practice, and personality, as well as inner emotional peace of self and happiness in life. Therefore, religion is one of the aspects that cannot be separated from human life. In Islam, religiosity is inseparable from Islamic education. A *Muallaf* (Muslim convert) is a person who has just converted to Islam. In Malaysia, the profile of *Muallafs* consists of different ages, races, levels of education, languages and cultures. After embracing Islam, it becomes *fardul kifayah* (a legal obligation that the Muslim community must discharge as a whole), especially for related institutions to play a role in guiding *Muallaf* towards a true understanding of Islam. A solid and holistic education, as well as spiritual and physical support, can strengthen the faith of *Muallafs*. Moreover, true Islamic religious education is very important to ensure that the *Muallafs* will get the best religious education so that they become perfect Muslims.

In Malaysia, the state government handles matters relating to Islamic religious affairs. This includes aspects related to Islamic education for *Muallafs*. The Religious Department and non-governmental organizations (NGO) related to *Muallaf* in each state have their syllabus for providing Islamic education to *Muallaf*. Thus, the different syllabuses may cause *Muallafs* to understand Islam from different points of view. At the same time, *Muallafs* require a certain period to ensure they can effectively implement the demands of Islamic teachings and religiosity. The study conducted by Shaharuddin et al. (2018) showed a lack of understanding among *Muallafs* about the faith, and it needs to be improved so that learning outcomes can be achieved perfectly. It is not surprising that *Muallafs* fail to adapt to Islamic values, which will cause them to return to their former belief and practices. The study by Muhammad et al. (2018) found 863 cases of applications by *Muallafs* to change the status of Islam to the former religion in Malaysia from 2000 to 2010.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is a learning process that brings changes in behaviour, attitude, and knowledge to improve human skills that can further benefit national development (Ishak & Kamarudin, 2019). Several Arabic terms signify the meaning of education, such as *ta'dib* (educating), *ta'lim* (teaching) and *tarbiyah* (also the meaning of educating and nurturing). However, Ahyat (2017) asserts that the word *ta'dib* is more appropriate for use in the context of Islamic religious education.

Under Islamic perspectives, education not only transfers information from a teacher to a student, but it also involves the formation of excellent human beings in this world and the hereafter. Thus, Jusof and Hamzah (2020) state that education from an Islamic perspective should be highlighted as *al-Din*; that is, the information conveyed should be fully applied by every believing Muslim as an individual. Similarly, Stapa, Yusuf, and Shahrudin (2012) explain that the concept of Islamic education is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah and should be related to faith in Allah SWT. Based on the above statement, it can be emphasized that Islamic education increases understanding and strengthens the confidence, appreciation, and practice of Islamic teachings based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

The effectiveness of the understanding and appreciation of Islamic education has much to do with teaching and learning methods. Related to this, Motevalli et al. (2021) state that good teaching sessions should involve teacher skills in applying suitable teaching and learning approaches. The learning methods, incorporated with emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement practices, have been affected as crucial elements that directly influence student engagement (Halif et al., 2020). The traditional delivery method of Islamic education is implemented through sermons, questions and answers, and discussions. In contrast, the current methods include doing assignments, experiments and demonstrations, facilitating and problem-solving (Ahyat, 2017). Islamic education is significant in developing attitudes and ways of thinking, mental resilience, the struggle for self-awareness, and understanding the direction of the rapidly changing reality of time. This is because Islamic education is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, which contains the elements of monotheism and worship as devotion to Allah SWT, in addition to forming a simple moral character and also towards eradicating bad attitudes (*sifat mazmumah*).

The firmness of a Muslim's religiosity is closely related to the effectiveness of Islamic education delivery. Thus, Arolah and Ismail (2019) state that religiosity reflects Islamic education received before students grow up or during the process of growing up. The Qur'an, as in Surah Al-An' am: 162, explains that the strength of a Muslim's commitment to live his

life refers to his level of religiosity as follows: "*Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds*". At the same time, teachers act as educating agents who need a clear attitude and behaviour to be appreciated by their students in school (Mukan, Kulai, & Che Md Nor, 2020). Religiosity could be described as practising with all its dimensions and scopes so that an individual feels peace of mind and self. In other words, an individual who embraces religiosity means that he commits piety and abandons all things that cause the wrath of Allah (Bakar, Ismail, & Abd Majid, 2019). Abdul Hamid et al. (2017) explain that religiosity internalises religious beliefs and teachings. It can manifest in various forms, such as ceremonies, prayers, worship, and even the formation of behaviours that relate to daily routines based on the teachings.

Muallaf is a group that has just embraced Islam and is known as the 'new brother', 'our brother', or Muslim convert (*Kamus Dewan*). In the dictionary of Lisān Al-^ʿArab, the word *Muallaf* is taken from the basic word *a-li-fa* (ألف), which means gentle, kind and loving. Meanwhile, the Cambridge International Dictionary of English coins the term 'convert' as someone who changes their beliefs or ways of living (Procter, 1995).

McGuire (1997) mentions that conversion is a process of religious change that transforms how the individual perceives the rest of society and his or her place in it, altering one's view of the world. The Qur'anic verse 60 (Chapter 9) refers to Muallafs as "those whose hearts are to be won over", or termed *Muallafat al-Qalub*. They are the newly converted Muslims who deserve to be given zakat as a means of giving full cooperation in contributing to and strengthening Islam since they might have lost their previous properties and, therefore, need assistance and encouragement (Johari et al., 2014). Financial help may strengthen their beliefs (faiths) and sense of belonging to the Muslim Ummah.

Rasimah (2012) categorised Muallafs into three groups in appreciating religion based on periods, namely the period of 1-5 years (study period), the period of 6-10 years (adjustment period), and 11 years and above (maturity period). In Malaysia, there is an increasing number of *Muallafs* every year. According to the statistics released by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), the number of *Muallafs* recorded from 2000 to 2012 was 106,747 (Abu Bakar & Ismail, 2018). The State Islamic Religious Department or the State Islamic Religious Council in Malaysia is the institution responsible for ensuring the affairs of *Muallaf* by the provisions under the *asnaf* (those who qualify to receive zakat funds) of Muslim converts. Therefore, this agency needs to play an important role in managing the affairs of *Muallaf* by providing program initiatives, especially in the form of education and Islamic guidance classes.

To instil understanding in the 'new converts' to Islam, education is one of the effective mediums through which *Muallafs* can gain knowledge about this new religion. Systematic and structured education will not only attract *Muallafs* to understand the teachings of Islam but also build their confidence in the truth of the religion they follow. Thus, in the Islamic education of *Muallafs*, attention to study and learning is concentrated at the beginning of their embrace because they are still searching for the real truth (Ab Halim, 2017). In undergoing 'innovation' in all routines of life, *Muallafs* will certainly face various obstacles. Muhammad et al. (2018) state that some *Muallafs* return to their original teachings because they feel difficulties in practising Islamic teachings due to the improper process of learning and teaching and its unsuitability to the levels of *Muallafs*.

Abu Bakar and Ismail (2018) emphasized the significance of Islamic education for *Muallafs* in addressing their spiritual needs, asserting that spiritual fortitude contributes to a well-rounded and fulfilling life. Similarly, Mustafa, Jaafar, and Ali (2017) identified several challenges faced by *Muallafs*, including insufficient Islamic knowledge, emotional distress, and unsupportive environments. Their study underscores the necessity of an effective *Muallaf* study module to enhance their understanding of Islam. Furthermore, Kasim, Abdul Hamid, and Jemali (2017) highlighted the importance of a strong foundation in the subject of faith. Hussin et al. (2019) expanded on this perspective, asserting that *Muallaf* education should not be confined to faith, jurisprudence (Syariah), morality (Akhlaq), and knowledge of the Quran and Hadith, but should also include the study of the Arabic language. This linguistic proficiency aids in a deeper appreciation of Islamic teachings, particularly in the context of worship. Based on these studies, it is evident that Islamic education is a critical component for *Muallafs*, with particular emphasis on faith, worship, and other essential aspects of religious learning.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected through qualitative research using a face-to-face individual interview guide. Field studies were conducted across four zones: the Darul Hidayah *Muallaf* Training Center in Kuala Terengganu (East Zone), the *Muallaf* Training Center at PERKIM Johor Bharu (Southern Zone), the *Muallaf* Training Center at PERKIM (West Zone), and the *Muallaf* Training Center at PERKIM Penang (Northern Zone). To gather comprehensive and detailed information, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 participants from these *Muallaf* Training Centers. The interview format allowed participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives, enabling the researchers to observe real-life situations and establish a rapport with the participants.

To maintain confidentiality and ensure the integrity of responses, participants remained anonymous. Their selection was based on voluntary participation. Additionally, four officers directly involved in Muallaf management were interviewed to provide general insights into the factors influencing religious conversion, the assistance available, and the challenges associated with Muallaf education. Interviews were conducted in a quiet and conducive environment, with sessions lasting between one to two hours. An audio recorder was used to capture the entirety of each session.

The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions, which were validated by experts in the field of Muslim converts. A pilot study was conducted to refine the data collection process, incorporating participant feedback to enhance the relevance and clarity of the interview questions. This pilot phase also helped researchers assess the validity of the instruments used and identify potential constraints during data collection. Interview questions were rigorously tested until participants' responses demonstrated consistency. Prior to conducting interviews, researchers obtained formal approval by submitting a research request letter to the relevant Religious Officer. The selection of participants was purposive, ceasing once data saturation was achieved, thereby ensuring a representative sample of the population of interest.

Upon collecting responses, researchers coded, classified, and analyzed key excerpts rather than merely transcribing the interviews. To facilitate analysis, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim before data processing began. Responses were categorized thematically based on predefined characteristics, including the background of informants, their perceptions of educational delivery methods, the factors influencing Muallafs' decision to pursue Islamic education, their learning experiences, and their attitudes toward Islamic studies. Confidentiality was upheld throughout the study, with participants identified using coded labels (Informant#1 to Informant#20).

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Informants Profile

The informants consisted of Malaysians from Chinese, Indian, Sabahan and Sarawak ethnic groups, as well as foreigners who married locals. Although this study was not comprehensive, it can describe the real situation that occurs in the community of *Muallaf* in Malaysia because the selected states represent the existing zones in Malaysia. At the same time, participants reflected on their religious life experiences in the zone. This is because the factors and

background of the surrounding community represent the views of the *Muallaf* community from all angles. The complete profile of the informants is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of Informants

Informant Code	Location	Gender	Race	Period of Embracing Islam	Notes
Informant#1	Terengganu	Female	Chinese	31 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#2	Terengganu	Female	Filipina	24 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#3	Terengganu	Male	Chinese	12 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#4	Terengganu	Female	Iban	10 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#5	Terengganu	Male	Chinese	22 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#6	Johor	Male	Chinese	5 year	spouse is Indonesian
Informant#7	Johor	Male	Chinese	5 year	Will get married to an Indonesian
Informant#8	Johor	Female	Indian	6 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#9	Johor	Female	Indian	5 year	spouse is Indian Muslim
Informant#10	Johor	Female	Filipina	6 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#11	Selangor	Female	Chinese	3 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#12	Selangor	Male	Kacukan Indian/Chinese	9 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#13	Selangor	Female	Dusun	14 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#14	Selangor	Female	Chinese	10 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#15	Selangor	Male	Chinese	33 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#16	Kedah	Male	Indian	2 year	divorced because of religious differences
Informant#17	Kedah	Male	Indian	1 year	Still young
Informant#18	Kedah	Female	Orang Asli	16 year	Still young
Informant#19	Kedah	Female	Indian	11 year	Still young
Informant#20	Kedah	Female	Iban	3 month	divorced because of different religious
Informant#21	Sabah	Female	Chinese	5 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#22	Sabah	Female	Thailand	7 year	spouse is Malay
Informant#23	Sabah	Female	Sino	1 year	Still single
Informant#24	Sabah	Female	Kadazan	6 month	Still single
Informant#25	Sabah	Female	Kadazan	5 month	Still single

Based on the demographic data of the study, the participants consisted of 8 males and 17 females. Most informants were married and chose the Malays as their spouses. A single informant is an individual who is unmarried, widowed and still young. There are *Muallafs* who divorced because they converted to Islam and planned to remarry by choosing a non-Malaysian citizen who works in Malaysia.

4.2 Muallaf Religiosity

The findings of this study discuss the main themes that can be identified from the participants' interview transcriptions. Five main themes were identified as indicators to illustrate the effects of Islamic education on religiosity among *Muallafs*: faith, the practice of prayer, learning the Qur'an, moral values in social relations and the practice of fasting.

4.2.1 Islamic Faith (Akidah) Education

Faith education explains divinity, prophethood, supernatural things, the hereafter and so on (Kasim et al., 2017). *Muallaf*, with low self-confidence in their old religion, looks at some aspects of divinity that are quite difficult to understand. Education on faith further strengthens the conversion of Muslims to Islam. The scriptures are the main source of information that touches on aspects of faith and the basis of religious beliefs. Lack of understanding of the basics of religion due to their failure to understand and read the original scriptures. Based on the interview, this reason is explained by Informant#6:

From the aspect of divinity in Islam it is considered easy to understand .. not difficult .. we are happier... not much thinking .. in Buddhism, understanding various statues is complex.

Informant#8 explained as below:

When I heard Ustaz Dr Zakir Naik's talk on youtube, the question that touched on Islam with Hinduism .. Dr said that Islam came from Allah and the Prophet Muhammad and His book (Al-Qur'an) that all Muslims can learn. but for Hinduism, they adhere to the Vedas but no one has ever read the Vedas Currently, I have learned to read the Qur'an.

Kasim et al. (2017) stated that learning of faith is not easily formed because it requires a solid and wholehearted acceptance and requires an understanding of thought that is strengthened by the propositions of transmitted (*naqliyyah*) and rational sources (*aqliyyah*) that dispel doubts. Therefore, all questions that affect the faith are tried to be resolved well through questions and answers with religious teachers in the class. Furthermore, the concept of faith also arises in the original religious belief. For *Muallafs* who are married to Malay Muslims, the spouse becomes the main reference person if any doubts or confusion about the faith. This is explained as follows:

If there is something I am not sure, for example, I feel hesitant about faith, I will ask my husband .. or ask the Ustaz (Religious teacher), ask people we can refer and believe... because I am afraid... if we already know someone that can be trusted, I am sure whatever he said was indeed correct. (Informant#11)

In general, the knowledge and faith of the *Muallafs* are not yet fully strong, and they are still confused with their old religion in some matters related to the Islamic faith. *Muallafs* have not yet been able to convince themselves of the aspects of the faith because it is supernatural. Shaharuddin et al. (2018) stated that the most important understanding of the faith needs to be emphasized after a non-Muslim converted to Islam. Understanding the Islamic faith plays a significant role in 'to win' and 'to soften' the heart of the *Muallafs* to practise Islam as a way of life sincerely. The process of cultivating faith in the soul through education is the most superior approach, as it produces a strong power in the human heart and soul. Therefore, *Muallafs* are a group newly exposed to the basic concepts of faith. These groups must also be given clear exposure and understanding through specific faith teaching.

4.2.2 The Practice of Prayer Worship (Solat)

The implementation of prayers is an obligation that must be fulfilled by every Muslim. Therefore, the priority in educating the *Muallaf* community is performing prayers. Implementing good prayers requires completing intentions, readings and all the movements. At the initial stage of the Muslim prayer, not every *Muallaf* understood and performed *solat* perfectly. The description of prayer in the early stage is described as follows:

At the beginning of embracing Islam, I did not pray .. at that time, it was difficult for me to do; if I did, I would look at the book .. at that time, prayer was unusual. Usually, I did not do the dawn prayer... I will not do prayers at noon.
(Informant#12)

Although *Muallafs* were not able to recite the recitation in prayer, some of them took the approach of recognizing prayer by only doing the pillars of *fi'li*. This is explained as follows:

"When I converted to Islam, I just followed the people's prayer (solat), I did not know how to recite in prayer ... I just followed the movement in prayer as my adoptive mother did". (Informant#20)

The emphasis on reciting some Qur'anic verses in prayer at an early stage is just a matter of memorizing *Surah al-Fatihah* (The Opening), which is a pillar in prayer. Taking into account that most *Muallafs* were not able to read, write and understand the *Jawi* and Arabic letters, the guidance centre (class) or the initiative of the *Muallafs* themselves to write the main readings in prayer such as *Surah al-Fatihah* using the Roman letter to memorize it. The practice of adoption is a tradition in Malaysia, both for Muslims and non-Muslims. Thus, the "adoption" will end the rights and responsibilities of the biological parents permanently, and it will be taken over by the adoptive parents (Ismail, 2020). For those with foster families, foster parents played an important role in providing prayer guidance to *Muallafs*. This experience is described as follows:

I live with my uncle (adoptive father)... he helps me... if he wants to pray, he tells me to memorize al-Fatihah .. he also tells me to memorize many verses.
(Informant#7)

Couples who have good religious knowledge and appreciate it in daily life can understand the concept and goals of marriage perfectly (Hadigunawan & Azahari, 2016). Therefore, for those who embraced Islam due to marriage factors, the strengthening of performing prayer was much encouraged by their respective spouses. In Islam, the practice of prayer is an obligation that is considered a pillar of religion and a form of manifestation of believing in Allah. In other words, the practice of prayer is a form of communication, intimacy, authority, devotion, fear, glorification, honour, and a form of *munajat* (closed communication) to the Almighty God

(Abd Razak, Sa'ari, & Syed Abdul Rahman, 2019). For those who know the importance of performing prayer, *Muallafs* performed this worship in many situations. Even so, some of the informants took it easy to keep the prayer time with the excuse of being busy with working hours.

4.2.3 The Practice of Fasting

One of the obligatory acts of worship (*ibada*) for Muslims is the practice of fasting in the month of Ramadan, which is the act of abstaining from eating, drinking, and having sexual activity from sunrise until sunset (Syalaby, 1982). Every Muslim is obliged to perform fasting during the month of Ramadan. However, most *Muallafs* faced the challenge of performing fasting as a result of this experience, which has never been done before embracing Islam. This is explained by Informant#8 as follows:

Before converting to Islam, I really could not accept the feeling of hunger... up to half a day only... I had to break my fast .. my purpose is to fast at this time because I intend to learn... I want to know what it feels like .. that time my husband is there ... he does not force but if I want to practice, it is also up to me... said my husband ... (Informant#8)

If they could not fast due to illness, had weak constitutions, and travelled, the *Muallafs* would not finish fasting until the end. However, this challenge was temporary. After several years of embracing Islam, *Muallafs* can perform fasting perfectly. However, some *Muallafs* did not have a problem performing fasting during the month of Ramadan, even if they were new to Islam. This is because they had practiced fasting before becoming Muslim. They followed other Muslim friends to do fasting. This is explained as follows:

Alhamdulillah, I have no problem fasting, because when I studied at MSU, I lived with Muslims .. so during the fasting month I fasted .. for three years... They went to the bazaar I follow... When they broke a fast I also join them .. at that time I was not a Muslim .. so now I'm used to it ... (Informant#4)

Baharuddin and Mohamad Ashari (2018) state that motivation is a process that gives action to a person's behavior and directs that behavior to a single goal. Therefore, a motivated individual will make a positive choice to implement something because he will know what this action

means to him and can satisfy his need to achieve the goal. The motivation of the Muslim friends around has caused the *Muallaf* to be able to perform the practice of fasting completely.

4.2.4 Learning and Reciting Qur'an

Interacting with the Qur'an is not just a matter of belief in what is contained in the book, but also includes the aspects of reading, memorizing, listening, learning, *tadabbur* (to understand the meaning of the words of the Qur'an with their deep and profound messages), appreciating and defending the Qur'an from any form of deviation (Kasan et al., 2017). Quranic education should start early by optimizing the potential of listening, observing and understanding the meaning. Thus, the method of learning the Qur'an needs to be done verbally by optimizing each of the three stages in the learning process (Setiawan, 2018). Knowing the *hijaiyah* letters is the basic key to reading the Qur'an and hadith, and for every Muslim, it has become a lifetime guide to understanding and mastering it (Nurhidayah, Jabir, & Rus'an, 2020). As a newcomer to the Muslim community, the education of al-Qur'an study begins with recognizing the letters of *hijaiyah*. Then, in the early stages, *Muallafs* are exposed to the skills of reading *iqra* books, which contain six levels.

The problem of the inability to write and master the letters of *hijaiyah* can affect students' achievement in Islamic education learning. This ability to read and write Arabic can be further nurtured to enhance the mastery of reading the Qur'an (Shapii, Mahayuddin, & Othman, 2020). Due to the importance of mastering the recitation of the Qur'an, informants made various alternatives to read faster. This is stated as follows:

I never read the book iqra 1-6 before, When I read the iqra one ..alif ba ta till ya' I will take the book... I memorized the letter mim, after that, I will write and make a sentence, the letter mim alif sounds 'ma'... I use a lot of writing methods... When coming to MAIDAM class...I start reading muqaddam's book.
(Informant#2)

The mistakes in reciting al-Qur'an are due to the negligence in identifying the *makhraj* of the letters, the rules of *tajwid*, the fluency of reading and the laws related to the recitation of the al-Qur'an (Hassan & Zailani, 2015). If the *Muallafs* are truly committed to always attending classes organized by the Religious Department Office or NGO, at least within a year, the *Muallaf* will be able to reduce errors in reading the Qur'an. In this regard, Informant#9 states as follows:

In a year, Alhamdulillah, I can read the Qur'an .. in the iqra' system .. for example, if our teacher uses the right method .. inshaAllah with the high desire of the students .. by a year or a year and a half, it is possible to recite the Qur'an .. but maybe makhraj (pronunciation of letters) needs to be improved more... Sometimes I read the meaning but usually read the Qur'an only....

However, some of the informants have embraced Islam longer, but they still have not mastered the *iqra'* book well due to the attitude of taking it lightly by not attending classes. Related to this, Ali Hasan et al. (2017) state that the factors of self-determination, peers, time, teaching staff, facilities and costs are among the factors that motivate adult students in learning the Qur'an. In the educational process, adults prefer to study independently, do not like memorization, prefer problem-solving, and do practical things. Thus, among the factors that influence *Muallaf* in learning the Qur'an is their earnest desire even though the Religious Department provides more flexible time to attend classes (Ismail, 2020). Among the *Muallafs* who still fail to read the Qur'an, they read the Qur'anic translation of the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an using a translation of language that is easy to understand. *Muallafs* who are identified as capable of mastering the study of the Qur'an are allowed to continue their studies at Institut Dakwah Islamiah PERKIM (IDIP). Apart from that, *Muallafs* took the initiative to learn al-Qur'an through YouTube because of time constraints. This is stated as follows:

I did go to learn to read the Qur'an .. after I moved to a new place.. the classes started at 9, which was at 9... I just got home .. so I have not gone to study for more than a year .. now I have bought one software... I heard it first .. later taught me to read... I read by myself at home. (Informant#6)

4.2.5 The Value of Islamic Morality (Akhlaq) in Social Relations

From the Islamic perspective, religion is a framework that supports the entire social system. The goal is to gain self-power in developing potential, skills, vision, and resources available to make decisions and take action for well-being based on divine guidance (Muhklisin & Suhendri, 2017). The issues that are often raised by the non-Muslim community in social relations in Malaysia are related to the emancipation of women, polygamy, the implementation of Islamic law, the law of covering the *aurat* and things that are considered superstitious. *Muallafs* are a group that once lived together in a non-Muslim community. Islamic education not only teaches the basics of faith, the implementation of prayers and the recitation of the

Qur'an, but also *Muallafs* are taught about the method of making a paradigm shift in establishing social relations. It can be said that the social relations of *Muallafs* are re-adjusted according to the framework outlined by Islam, which involves adherence to the Islamic code of dress or covering the *aurat*, rejecting any form of free polytheism (*syirk*), food and drink care, relationships with family and non-Muslim communities surrounding and so on. In terms of association, the experience of religiosity in Islamic moral education is as follows:

We have left things that Islam forbids such as free association, not matter.. you can just touch non-mahram friends .. when I convert to Islam is an ashamed .. Previous clothes were very sexy ... (Informant#2)

Indeed, partners play an important role in further strengthening the faith of the Muslim converted to Islam to the things that an original Muslim commonly does. This is explained by Informant#8 as follows;

I know Islamic education from my husband, who showed and taught me... I converted to Islam in the second month of 2015. After a month, I got married, and my husband told me to wear a hijab; the first year, I was uncomfortable... I felt very hot .. it was difficult, feel uneasy ... everything was there but after a year I was used to it.

Ismail et al. (2017) state that individuals growing up in a risky environment are more susceptible to unhealthy activities. Considering the various risks that would be faced if social space occurred in the life of the original family and community, *Muallafs* chose a place to live in another area. For Informant#4, environmental factors can stimulate one to appreciate Islamic values daily. Thus, he decided to migrate from Sarawak from the Christian community environment to the environment inhabited by the Muslim community in Terengganu.

Harmonious living is a central goal in the maintenance of *Muallaf* social relations with non-Muslim families. The Religious Department Officer and NGO have attempted to fulfil the requirements of the *Muallafs*, particularly in social relations with non-Muslim families, so that they can achieve happiness. Islam provides an example of tolerance and inter and intra-communal respect, and a teaching of great knowledge. Thus, everything that contributes to a conflict between *Muallaf* and non-Muslim families should be avoided. Abdul Rahman (2020) states that through the classes organized, *Muallafs* are reminded not to stop social relationships

with their non-Muslim family. Therefore, when MAIDAM organized festive celebrations and certain events, family members of non-Muslims were invited together to celebrate the event. The purpose is to correct the negative perception of the non-Muslim family that Islam has never taught its adherents to terminate relations with the family despite their different religions. The goal of Islamic education is to produce people who are knowledgeable, faithful, and pious. Therefore, students who follow this subject will be able to build a community of believers, virtuous, grateful, understanding and united and contribute to the country's development and well-being.

Sharia education is a very important lesson that addresses social relations between men and women in Islam. This is a significant aspect of the appreciation of education by introducing an approach to dealing with the problem of free association (Sidek et al., 2018). From one aspect, the impact of Islamic education can uphold a new character for the *Muallaf*, namely, a Muslim who practices good morals, patience, and respect for others. This is stated as follows:

Before I converted to Islam, I was a hot-tempered person... I was always angry with people, I am the most hot-tempered .. now it's gone .. the previous time when my wife gets angry, I will fight with her .. now no more. (Informant#7)

Based on the above explanation, it can be stated that before converting to Islam, the level of *Muallafs'* understanding of Islam is quite general. *Muallaf* Islamic education emphasizes basic acts considered mandatory by believers and is the foundation of Muslim life as such faith, *solat*, fasting, reading al-Qur'an and having good morality. However, the process of religiosity of Islam among the *Muallafs* takes several periods depending on the seriousness, age, level of education, the period of embracing Islam, and the ability to master the language. In the first 5 years, *Muallafs* need continuous support and assistance from all parties as their knowledge of Islam is still unstable. In short, the implications of Islamic education of *Muallafs* on their religiosity are as shown briefly in Figure 1 below.

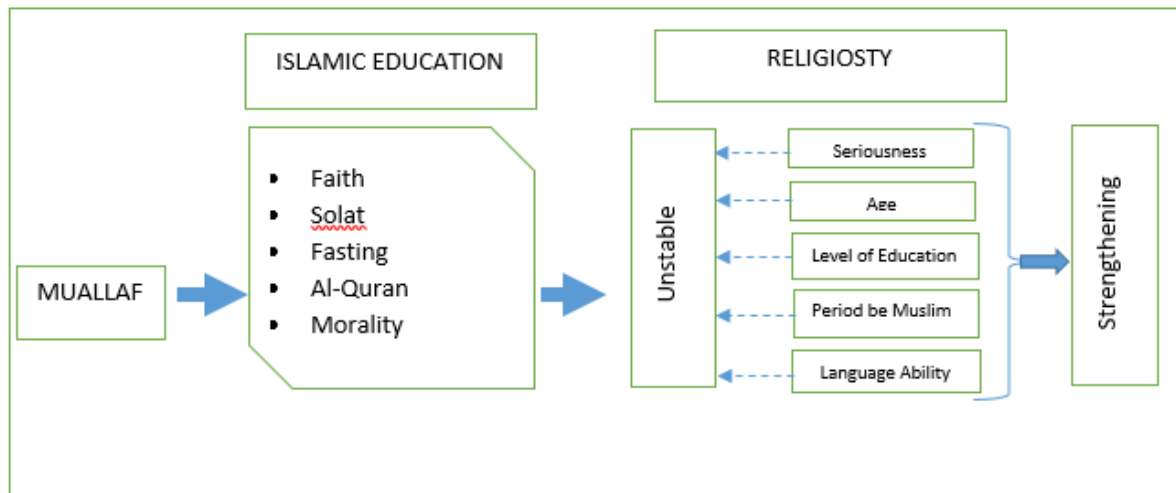


Figure 1: Islamic education and *Muallaf*'s religiosity

5.0 CONCLUSION

The dynamics of Islamic education on the *Muallaf* community's religiosity have various effects. Islamic education with a wide scope of discussion requires an effort that is *istiqamah* and various methods of teaching that it is easy to understand by students. Considering the aspects of the development and strengthening of faith, strengthening prayers, reading the Qur'an, Islamic *muamalat* and implementing fasting are the initial aspects emphasized in Islamic education at Islamic Guidance Centers. *Muallafs*, who are usually adult students from various age backgrounds and education, have different abilities to understand and subsequently appreciate Islam's teachings. In other words, the pattern of strengthening the religious appreciation of the *Muallaf* community takes place gradually until, in certain periods, they truly become true Muslims. Therefore, the continuous motivation, support and concern of the surrounding Muslim community can catalyze the *Muallaf* community's religiosity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education and Universiti Teknologi Mara, Grant No. 600-IRMI / FRGS / 5/3 (473/2019).

REFERENCE

Ab Halim, N. I. H. (2017). *Persepsi saudara baru terhadap pembelajaran agama Islam di Pusat Bimbingan Islam Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah (PUSBA)*. (Unpublished master thesis). Jabatan Dakwah and Kepimpinan, Fakulti Pengajian Islam, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

- Abd Razak, S., Sa'ari, C. Z., & Syed Abdul Rahman, S. M. S. (2019). Adab solat dan puasa serta hubungannya dengan pembangunan rohani Insan: Analisis pemikiran al-Sarraj: (M378H) dalam karya al-Luma' fi tarikh al-tasawwuf al-Islami. *Jurnal A-Basirah*, 9(1), 19-37.
- Abdul Hamid, S., Ishak, M. S., Abdul Rahman, M. N., Dato' Dahaman @ Dahlan, M. A., & Hashim, H. (2017). Penghayatan agama (religiosity) dan praktis keusahawanan: Analisis implikasi dalam pembangunan usahawan Melayu. *International Journal of the Malay World and Civilisation*, 5(3), 49-57.
- Abdul Rahman, A. H. L. (2020). Interviewed at Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Melayu (MAIDAM) Terengganu. <http://www.maidam.gov.my/index.php/ms/>
- Abu Bakar, S. A., & Ismail, S. Z. (2018). Pengurusan mualaf di Malaysia: Kerjasama dinamik antara agensi kerajaan dan bukan kerajaan. *Jurnal Usuluddin*, 46(2), 97-122.
- Ahyat, N. (2017). Metode pembelajaran pendidikan agama Islam. *Edusiana: Jurnal Manajemen dan Pendidikan Islam*, 4(1), 24-31.
- Ali Hasan, A. R., Mohd Patel, I. F., Abd Ghani, A. R., & Jemali, M. (2017). Faktor motivasi dalam amalan pembelajaran hafazan Al-Qur'an. *Jurnal Perspektif: Jurnal Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan*, 9(3), 13-20.
- Arolah, R., & Ismail, A. (2019). Peranan guru Pendidikan Islam membentuk akhlak pelajar di Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Daerah Kunak Sabah. *Al-Hikmah Journal of Islamic Dakwah*, 11(1), 74-87.
- Baharuddin, M. K., & Mohamad Ashari, Z. (2018). Hubungan antara emosi malu terhadap gaya pertautan dan motivasi pencapaian dalam kalangan pelajar: Satu kajian meta analisis. *Sains Humanika*, 10(3), 15-18.
- Bakar, N. H., Ismail, N., & Abd Majid, M. (2019). Membangunkan penghayatan hidup beragama dalam kalangan remaja melalui pendidikan jihad. *Jurnal Sultan Alauddin Sulaiman Shah*, 1(Special Issue), 147-161.
- Hadigunawan, H., & Azahari, R. (2016). Penghayatan Islam dan hubungannya dengan konflik rumah tangga: Kajian di runding cara, bahagian undang-undang keluarga, Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor. *Jurnal Syariah*, 24(3), 393-422.
- Halif, M. M, Hassan, N., Sumardi, N. A, Omar, A. S, Ali, S., Abdul Aziz, R., ... Salleh, N. F. (2020). Moderating effects of student motivation on the relationship between learning styles and student engagement. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 16(2), 295-103.
- Hassan, S. S., & Zailani, M. A. (2015). Bentuk-bentuk kesalahan bacaan Al-Qur'an pelajar di sebuah IPTA. *The Online Journal of Islamic Education*, 3(2), 1-9.

- Hussin, M. N., Abd Rahman, K. A., & Wazir, R. (2019). Kajian deskriptif terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Arab dalam kalangan mualaf. *Paper presented at the International Conference on Muallaf 2019, Grand Bluewave Hotel, Shah Alam*. ICoM 2019
- Ishak, N., & Kamarudin, K. (2019). Pendidikan anak-anak menerusi surah Luqman dalam novel Ayahanda. *Jurnal MANU*, 30(1), 103-129.
- Ismail, S. (2020). Peruntukan undang-undang bagi proses pengangkatan dan menjaga hak serta kebajikan anak angkat. *Journal of Law & Governance*, 2(1), 39-50.
- Ismail, R., Ahmad, N. A., Ibrahim, F., & Nen. S. (2017). Pengaruh faktor individu, keluarga dan persekitaran sosial terhadap tingkah laku penyalahgunaan bahan dalam kalangan remaja. *Akademika*, 87(1), 7-16.
- Johari, F., Ab. Aziza, M. R., Ibrahim, M. F., & Mohd Ali, A. F. (2014). Zakat distribution and programme for sustaining muallaf beliefs and thoughts. *Jurnal Teknologi*, 66(1), 35-43.
- Jusof, N., & Hamzah, M. A. (2020). Kemahiran guru pendidikan Islam di sekolah rendah terhadap pelaksanaan pengajaran berpusatkan murid: Satu analisa. *International Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 2(3), 1-26.
- Kasan, H., Mustafa, M. F., Haimi, S. S., & Faruk, U. (2019). Faktor interaksi dengan al-Qur'an dalam proses penghayatan kehidupan beragama pelajar-pelajar UKM. *Jurnal Islam dan Masyarakat Kontemporari*, 15(1), 89-98.
- Kasim, A. Y., Abdul Hamid, S., & Jemali, M. (2017). Pengajaran akidah dalam kalangan mualaf di Institut Dakwah Islamiyah PERKIM. *Jurnal Perspektif: Jurnal Sains Sosial Dan Kemanusiaan*, 1(1), 89-100.
- McGuire, M. B. (1997). *Religion: The social context* (4th ed.). Wadworth Publishing Company.
- Motevalli, S., Ghani Hamzah, M. S., Roslan, S., Hamzah, S. R., & Garmjani, M. G. (2021). The effects of study skills training on qualitative academic achievement among students. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 17(3), 130-141.
- Muhammad, S., Siren, N. R., & Md Yusoff, Y. (2018). Faktor permohonan isytihar murtad dalam kalangan mualaf di Selangor. *Jurnal Usuluddin*, 46(2), 123-146.
- Muhklisin, A., & Suhendri, A. (2017). Aplikasi teori sosiologi dalam pengembangan masyarakat Islam. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication*, 2(2), 211-234.
- Mukan, S. M. W., Kulai, D., & Che Md Nor, R. (2020). Nursing students' perceived effective clinical teachers' behaviors. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 16(4), 200-210.
- Mustafa, M., Jaafar, N. A. S., & Ali, K. (2017). Management of dakwah towards muallaf: A case study at Kompleks al-Saadah, Seremban. *Paper presented at the International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*. Open University of Malaysia.

- Nurhidayah, N., Jabir, M., & Rus'an, R. (2020). Studi analisis kemampuan mengenal huruf Hijaiyah pada anak usia dini melalui bermain puzzle di Kelompok B Tk Al-Khairaat Kabonena Kota Palu. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, 1(1), 53-62.
- Procter, P. (1995). *Cambridge international dictionary of English*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rasinah, H. A. (2012). *Penerimaan dan kefahaman tentang Islam dalam kalangan masyarakat Dusun dan Murut di Brunei Darussalam*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Universiti Malaya.
- Setiawan, E. (2018). Meningkatkan kemampuan membaca awal Al-Qur'an melalui metode Albana pada anak usia 5-6 tahun. *Al-Mudarris Journal of Education*, 1(2), 68-75.
- Shaharuddin, S. A, Shaharuddin, H. N, Abdullah, M. Y. M., & Misra, M. K. A. (2018). Tahap kefahaman akidah dalam kalangan muallaf di negeri Selangor. *Jurnal Sultan Alauddin Sulaiman Shah*, 5(1), 82-89.
- Shapii, A., Mahayuddin, Z. R, & Othman, S. (2020). Jom Jawi: Meningkatkan penguasaan bahasa Jawi di kalangan murid sekolah rendah mengguna media interaktif. *Jurnal Dunia Pendidikan*, 2(3), 212-230.
- Sidek, D., Ab Rahman, R., Ramli, R., Thoarlim, A., & Zakaria, M. B. (2018). Keberkesanan mata pelajaran Pendidikan Syariah Islamiah terhadap pergaulan pelajar. *Malaysian Journal for Islamic Studies*, 2(1), 25-42.
- Stapa, Z., Yusuf, N., & Shaharudin, A. F. (2012). Pendidikan menurut Al-Qur'an dan sunnah serta peranannya dalam memperkasakan tamadun ummah. *Jurnal Hadhari*, 1(Special Edition), 7-22.
- Syalaby, A. (1982). *Islam dalam timbangan*. Al- Maarif.