

THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AMONG NON-MUSLIMS ABOUT ISLAM IN KUALA KANGSAR

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Abstract

The diversity of religions and races shows that Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country. Islam is the religion of the Malaysian Federal Constitution. Today, the number of preachers in Malaysia is increasing progressively. However, the *da'wah* movement against non-Muslims has not yet reached its target. Various issues and challenges are involved carrying out *da'wah* to non-Muslim communities. Among them, the preachers in Malaysia are still argued about the best message to deliver to non-Muslims. This study was carried out using a descriptive method in breaking down the knowledge among non-Muslims in Kuala Kangsar about Islam. The method used of this study is survey method using questionnaires to collect information on the basic knowledge among non-Muslims (Chinese and Indian) in understanding of Islam including Aqidah, Fiqh and Tasawwuf. A total of 200 respondents were participated in this study. The study found that the respondents have a high level of knowledge at an average mean of 3.48 regarding the concept of God is one, Islam is not the creation of Muhammad, Islam is a religion that brings peace, Islam respects other religions, Islam is synonymous with Malay culture, and the concept of halal and haram in Islam. Nevertheless, the results of the study show that the respondents have a moderate level of knowledge at an average level of 2.92 regarding the concept of hudud, the pillars of faith, the pillars of Islam, the pillars of marriage, the concept of polygamy, zakat, and pilgrims.

Keywords: *Da'wah*; Knowledge level; Non-Muslims; Islam; Kuala Kangsar

Introduction

Preaching is a religious obligation that must be carried out by every Muslim. It is a task that has been passed down from generations to generations, since the time of the prophets and the companions. Allah says in the Al-Quran

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

"And there should be a group that calls to virtue (developing Islam) and orders to do all the good things and forbids from the wrong things (bad and vile), and those who are like that are successful people". (Surah Ali Imran, 104)

Al-Bayanuni (2014) stated that this verse explains that everyone is obligated to preach as the word **منكم** does not mean a certain few from the Muslims, but it all Muslims in general. Furthermore, **منكم** brings a meaning of affirmation (الليان), which further emphasizes the obligation of enjoining good and forbidding evil (الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر). Thus, *da'wah* is *fardu ain*, an obligation that must be performed by each Muslim, pertaining to their ability. *Da'wah* can be defined as an effort to bring others to understand the religion of Islam, all in implementing the rulings of Allah (teaching and disciplining). Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi explained that the preach message must be conveyed to every level of people to believing God (Al-Qaradhawi, 2014). This noble message, then, is meant for all the people on earth regardless of race, descent, age and religion.

Al-Ghazali (2015) also mentions preaching as a *barnamij* (البرنامج), a comprehensive program that has all the knowledge required by man to explain the purpose and goals of life, as well as a guidance in itself. In examining this definition, preaching is seen as a systematic and organized endeavor. *Da'wah* requires high-level understanding in examining every aspect related to it. Efforts made without planning will not be able to produce a satisfactory product. The same goes for preaching efforts which need to be accompanied by good planning and management. Every planning and management of *da'wah* is relative to the methods in determining the results and meeting the target (Don, A. et al, 2009).

According to Meerangani (2019), the chronology of *da'wah* efforts in Malaysia generally shows a positive development especially with the emergence of various institutions and associations that are seen to be consistently boosting the Islamic *da'wah* in Malaysia. In prepping for *da'wah*, a good preacher should know the target group of *da'wah* first. Abd Rahman (2008) stated that the target recipients of the *da'wah* can be divided into two groups, namely *mad'u ijabah* and *mad'u da'wah*. *Mad'u ijabah* refers to Muslims who have accepted the call of Islamic preaching and practice all the rules contained therein. *Mad'u da'wah* refers to non-Muslims who are still not believing and misguided from Islamic teachings either due to their rejection of Islam, or the call of Islamic *da'wah* has not yet reached to them (Abu Dardaa, 2014).

Missionary efforts on these two groups are equally prioritized and need to be effectively mobilized by preachers. However, the main focus of most of this *da'wah* movement is seen to be more directed towards *da'wah* towards Muslims and less focused towards non-Muslims. This is not unusual considering the Muslims in Malaysia make up about 60% of the population – the majority would be prioritized over the minority (Meerangani, 2019).

Muslim scholars did not specify terminologies regarding the actual definition of non-Muslims. However, in general, they can be defined as those who do not worship and monotheize God and do not accept and acknowledge the position of the Messenger of God as the last messenger. This is because the determination of a person's position as a Muslim is closely related to these two elements (Khairul Azhar, 2016). The obligation to preach to non-Muslims is not something new, as it has started since the time of the Prophet s.a.w in Mecca until he migrated to Madinah. The revelation in Mecca emphasizes the question of faith as the backbone of a Muslim's identity. However, there are still Muslims who are confused by the importance of conveying the message of *da'wah* to non-Muslims, despite this group being the main target to be preached to because the highest demand of *da'wah* is to call towards monotheism of God and free oneself from the shackles of polytheism and not believing, as the greatest evil and cruelty according to Islam is polytheism. Even if they do various good deeds and benevolence, the sin of polytheism will wipe out the good for that virtue (Abd al-Karim, 1976). To emphasize, preaching message needs to be conveyed to everyone including the non-Muslim community.

The message of da'wah must be related to 3 components of Islamic education which is Aqidah, Fiqh and Tasawwuf. These three elements of Islamic knowledge were taken from the Hadith of Jibril. The Hadith is named as such due to Jibril who came to Prophet Muhammad to ask about Islam, Faith and Ihsan (Masduki Asyhari, 2020). Jibril, who is an angel, morphed into a human form and came to Prophet Muhammad and asked about Islam, Iman and Ihsan. The Prophet's answer was commented by Jibril with the word "true". That is, Prophet Muhammad knew the answer from Jibril, on the contrary Jibril also knew that Prophet Muhammad knew the answers. The Prophet Muhammad explained at the end that Jibril came to teach the Companions about Islam, Faith and Ihsan. (Al-Fasyani, 2009). The scholars have stated that the theme around the values of Islamic knowledge in the content of the Hadith (Faith, Islam and Ihsan) is the value of faith, worship (fiqh) and ihsan. (Siregar, 2022). To find out the level of understanding of non-Muslims in Kuala Kangsar, this study will present questions related to faith (aqidah), worship (fiqh) and morals (akhlak).

Problem Statement

Today, the number of preachers in Malaysia is increasing day by day (Zahrin, 2014). There are also some da'wah organizations that are active in carrying out da'wah activities to non-Muslim groups such as Multiracial Reverted Muslims (MRM) who are more proactive in carrying out street da'wah efforts (Meerangani, 2019).

However, the da'wah movement towards non-Muslims has not yet reached its target. There are various issues and challenges in handling da'wah to non-Muslim communities. Among the issues is that the preachers in Malaysia are still arguing about what is the most appropriate message to deliver to non-Muslims (Embong, 2022). This affects the non-Muslim understanding of Islamic religious teachings and the occurrence of misunderstanding of the message that the preacher wants to convey.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. To identify the level of non-Muslim respondents' knowledge of Islam related to Aqidah, Fiqh, and Tasawwuf.
2. To analyze the suitable message for the non-Muslim about Islam.

Research Methodology

This study was carried out using a descriptive method for its relevance in breaking down the knowledge of non-Muslims in Kuala Kangsar on Islam. Survey method used is for collecting primary data from respondents. Questionnaires were structured based on the basic knowledge among non-Muslims in understanding of Islam including Aqidah, Fiqh and Tasawwuf.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section comprises demographic including gender, age group, income level, religion and education background. The second section of the questionnaire was about the understanding of Aqidah, Fiqh, and Tasawwuf questions. This

section consists of 21 statements related to the faith of Muslim identified via the literature. The items were evaluated using a five-point Likert-scale to illustrate their degree of agreement. Scale point "5" indicated "Strongly Agree", point "4" indicated "Agree", point "3" indicated "Neither Disagree nor Agree", point "2" indicated "Disagree" and point "1" for "Strongly Disagree". The questionnaire was distributed to 200 respondents' non-Muslim community of Hindus and Buddhists.

Findings

Respondent's Demography

Table 1 shows Places in Kuala Kangsar and Number of Respondents

No	Places in Kuala Kangsar	Number of Respondents
1.	Dewan Pesatuan India	20
2.	Persatuan Kiung Chow	15
3.	Hainan Association Kuala Kangsar	18
4.	SJK (T) Gandhi Memorial	19
5.	SJK (C) Sauk	28
6.	S.J.K (C) Liman	18
7.	Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan Tsung Wah	21
8.	TF Mart	18
9.	Mc Donald	21
10.	Eco Shop	22
Total respondents		200

The following is a table that includes the background of the study respondents as follows:

Table 2 shows Demographics of Respondents

Item		Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	132	66
	Woman	68	34
Age	<18	25	12.5
	19-25	57	28.5
	26-30	45	22.5
	31-40	61	30.5
	>41	12	6
Education Level	No formal education	23	11.5
	Primary school	32	16
	PMR/PT3	44	22
	SPM/STPM	49	24.5
	Diploma/Degree	51	25.5
	Master/PhD	1	0.5
Race	Chinese	146	73
	India	54	27
Religion	Christian	146	73
	Hindu	54	27

Based on the table above, this study involves a total of 200 respondents consisting of 132 males and 68 females. The majority of the respondents are aged 19-25 years, which is 136 people (28.5%) followed by 31-40 years old, which is 61 people (30.5%).

The education level shows that most respondents hold a diploma/degree which is 51 (25.5%) followed by SPM/STPM with 49 (24.5%). The Chinese respondents are 146 people (73%), and the Indians are 54 people (27%). While, according to religion, Hindus are 140 (43.1%), then Buddhists with 116 (35.7%), Christians with 54 (16.6%), atheists 11 (3.4%), Sikhs and animism with 2 each (0.6%).

The level of non-Muslim knowledge of Islamic beliefs and culture involves 21 questions measured using a Likert scale with five measurement scales (strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree). In order to evaluate the mean level of each item studied, the table below shows the study findings to illustrate the mean level.

Table 3 shows the analysis of Mean

Mean Score	Mean Level
1.00-2.00	Low
2.01-3.00	Medium
3.01-4.00	High
4.01-5.00	Very High

Table 4 shows the level of knowledge among the non-Muslims about Islam

No.	Item	SD	D	ND	A	SA	Mean	Result
1	Islam and the culture of the Malay are the same	15 (5.4%)	50 (18%)	93 (33.5%)	103 (37%)	17 (6.1%)	3.21	High
2	Islam believes that God is one	10 (3.6%)	15 (5.4%)	81 (29.1%)	123 (44.2%)	49 (17.7%)	3.67	High
3	I know that Islam is not the creation of Muhammad	17 (6%)	40 (14.4%)	137 (49.3%)	65 (23.4%)	19 (6.9%)	3.48	High
4	Islam is the religion of peace	7 (2.5%)	15 (5.4%)	70 (25.2%)	137 (49.3%)	49 (17.6%)	3.74	High
5	Islam respects the other religions	9 (3.2%)	18 (6.5%)	50 (18%)	146 (52.5%)	55 (19.8%)	3.79	High
6	Islam is the religion for all people	25 (9%)	56 (20.1%)	70 (25.2%)	84 (30.2%)	43 (15.5%)	3.23	High
7	Islam is the same religion to	35 (12.6%)	77 (27.7%)	55 (19.8%)	74	37 (13.3%)	2.97	Medium

	Buddhism, Hinduism								(26.6%)
8	I understand the concept of halal and haram in Islamic nutrition	7 (2.5%)	20 (7.2%)	45 (16.2%)	158 (56.8%)	48 (17.3%)	3.79	High	
9	I understand the concept of halal and haram in the Islamic religion	8 (2.9%)	24 (8.6%)	53 (19.1%)	129 (53.6%)	44 (15.8%)	3.42	High	
10	I understand the concept of halal and haram in Islamic marriage	8 (2.9%)	21 (7.6%)	93 (33.4%)	122 (43.9%)	34 (12.2%)	3.55	High	
11	I understand the concept of hudud in Islam	31 (11.1%)	38 (13.5%)	138 (50%)	61 (22%)	10 (2.4%)	2.93	Medium	
12	Islam is the same as Malay	16 (5.8%)	62 (22.3%)	86 (30.9%)	89 (32%)	25 (9%)	3.16	High	
13	Islam burdens people because there are many prayers and fasting for a month	37 (13.3%)	72 (25.9%)	89 (32%)	62 (22.3%)	18 (6.5%)	2.83	Medium	
14	I know the pillars of Islam	19 (6.8%)	61 (22%)	148 (53.2%)	35 (12.5%)	15 (5.5%)	2.88	Medium	
15	I know the pillars of Iman	22 (7.9%)	50 (18%)	146 (52.5%)	46 (16.6%)	14 (5%)	2.93	Medium	
16	I know the rules of marriage	16 (5.8%)	63 (22.7%)	141 (50.7%)	44 (15.8%)	14 (5%)	2.92	Medium	
17	I know the concept of polygamy in Islam	25 (9%)	70 (25.2%)	103 (37%)	53 (19.1%)	27 (9.7%)	2.95	Medium	
18	I understand the concept of zakat in Islam	21 (7.5%)	35 (12.6%)	99 (35.6%)	95 (34.2%)	28 (10.1%)	3.26	High	
19	I know the concept of Hajj in Islam	11 (4%)	41 (14.7%)	104 (37.4%)	90 (32.4%)	32 (11.5%)	3.30	High	

20	I understand the concept of halal (allowed) in Islam	9 (3.2%)	29 (10.4%)	80 (28.8%)	121 (43.6%)	39 (14%)	3.55	High
21	I understand the concept of haram (forbidden) in Islam	9 (3.2%)	23 (8.3%)	73 (26.3%)	131 (47.1%)	42 (15.1%)	3.63	High
Total Mean							3.29	High

Table 3 shows the level of knowledge of the non-Muslim regarding Islamic beliefs and culture. The mean value of non-Muslim respondents' level of knowledge about Islam is at mean level of 3.29. This means that the level of knowledge of the non-Muslim about Islamic beliefs and culture is at a high level (refer to the mean analysis in Table 2).

The level of knowledge of non-Muslims in Kuala Kangsar regarding Islamic beliefs and culture, it shows 13 items are at a high level. Beginning from the question Islam and the culture of the Malay are same (mean 3.21), Islam believes that God is one (mean 3.67), I know that Islam is not the creation of Muhammad (mean 3.48), Islam is the religion of peace (mean 3.74), Islam respect the other religions (mean 3.79), Islam is the religion for all people (mean 3.23), I understand the concept of Halal and Haram in Islamic nutrition (mean 3.79), I understand the concept of halal and haram in the Islamic religion (mean 3.42), I understand the concept of halal and haram in Islamic marriage (mean 3.55), Islam is the same as Malay (mean 3.16), I understand the concept of zakat in Islam (mean 3.26), I know the concept of Hajj in Islam (mean 3.30), I understand the concept of halal (allowed) in Islam (mean 3.55), I understand the concept of haram (forbidden) in Islam (mean 3.63).

While seven of the items are at a medium level, namely; Islam is the same religion to Buddhism and Hinduism (mean 2.97) I understand the concept of Hudud in Islam (mean 2.93), Islam burdens people because there are many prayers and fasting for a month (mean 2.83), I know the pillars of Islam (mean 2.88), I know the pillars of Iman (mean 2.93), I know the rules of marriage (mean 2.92), I know the concept of polygamy in Islam (mean 2.95). This shows that the respondents have a high level of knowledge about Islam in general and only have a moderate knowledge of the pillars and concepts of Islam in detail.

Discussion

Based on the final results of the study, it shows that the overall mean for all 21 questions is 3.29, which is a high level. However, from the 21 questions given, seven of them show a moderate mean and others show high. It does not show a significant difference. Respondents were less certain when asked about Islam, a religion for all people.

Overall, the majority of non-Muslims in Kuala Kangsar still think that Islam and Malay culture are the same. In reality, Islam and Malays have two different entities, Islam is a religion and Malays are a nation. This notion results in a large part of the non-Muslim community in Malaysia thinking that when the non-Muslim converts to Islam, consequently they need to understand and accept Malay culture. One of the reasons being is in Malaysia, the Malays are seen as synonymous with Islam (Yusuf Marlon, 2018). According to Tan

(2004) "revert to Islam" means "turn into Malay" and for that reason Chinese people who embrace Islam are not favored by the Chinese (Mohd Ridhuan Tee, 2010; Ann Wan Seng, 2009; Osman Chua, 2005; Idris, 1995). While Ann Wan Seng (2009) stated there are almost 20 million Muslims in China. Mohd Ridhuan Tee (2006), described Islam being equated with Malays, Malays being equated with Islam is a process of political socialization that has long been rooted in society in Malaysia and according to Osman Chua (2005) this misunderstanding needs to be corrected.

Regarding the concept of halal and haram in nutrition, the majority of respondents responded in agreement. The results of Mohd Yazid & Shahrul Nizam's study (2015) also found that non-Muslim respondents have a high level of knowledge in terms of halal and haram aspects of nutrition. They know the basics such as the prohibition of pork and alcohol. They also know about the situation if there is a mixture between halal and haram elements, it is haram for Muslims to eat. In addition, they also know about the sharing meat storage and the use of cooking equipment for halal and haram food. Not only that, according to a study conducted by Vloreen Nity Mathew et al (2014) non-Muslim consumers do have positive attitude on Halal concept and have the intention to purchase Halal food. The research also shows the raising concern over health among consumers as Halal certified food products guarantee the hygiene and cleanliness.

In addition, in terms of hudud context, respondents still have a simple understanding where the majority lack understanding of this concept. This is in line with Dr. Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil's statement through Utusan Melayu (2014) stated that that in reality, even Muslims themselves do not understand hudud law, let alone non-Muslims. A need arises for basic education about Islamic criminal law. The community needs to be exposed to the basic teachings of Islam and however the aspect of evidence needs to be understood by non-Muslims. Prof Mahmood Zuhdi said in Berita Harian (2015), one of the issues concerning hudud is that the community does not see hudud as a whole, whereas Islam should be (2015). He also stated that the Government needs to give a lot of understanding to the society of what is hudud. It is not surprising, then, that some of the non-Muslim community themselves are confused in understanding the true concept of hudud.

Next, the respondents were uncertain followed by the majority agreeing that Islam burdens people. According to Mohd Azhar Abd Hamid et al (2013), for the non-Muslim community, they consider that embracing Islam as a burdensome matter. They had to abandon habits that had been rooted for a long time such as drinking alcohol, gambling, eating non-halal foods like pork and so on. They are also required to cover more of their body, circumcise and fast. Therefore, the preacher should make the community understand that the things commanded and prohibited in Islam are not intended to burden but to enjoin good and deter harm for each individual (Raysuni, 1999). Preachers should also teach gradually and prioritize on basic things first (Al-Qaradhawi, 2014). This is in line with the hadith from the Messenger:

يسروا ولا تعسروا، وبشروا ولا تنفروا

"Make things easy and do not make them difficult, cheer the people up by conveying glad tidings to them and do not repulse (them)." (Narrated by Bukhari, 67), (Narrated by Muslim, 3264), (Narrated by Abu Daud, 4195)

The study found that respondents have a high knowledge of Islam such as God is one, Islam is not the creation of Muhammad, Islam is a religion that brings peace, Islam respects other religions, Islam is synonymous with Malay culture, and the concept of halal and haram in Islam. Nevertheless, the results of the study show that the respondents are seen to have a moderate level of knowledge regarding the concept of hudud, the pillars of faith, the pillars of Islam, the pillars of marriage, the concept of polygamy, zakat, and pilgrims.

Conclusion

Although the results of this study show that the respondents have a high knowledge of Islamic beliefs and culture, accurate preaching efforts to increase the understanding of Islam towards non-Muslims must be continued and increased. Preachers need to bear the responsibility to continue to spread the teachings of Islam to the community, especially to the non-Muslim community in Malaysia with the correct and appropriate manner of the message.

In Malaysia, there are still internal conflicts between races and religions from a political, social and other point of view that can have an impact on the harmony and unity of the pluralistic society in our country. A good understanding of Islam to the whole community improves to some extent and guarantees peace in the country of Malaysia. This is the fact that Islamic teachings bring the concept of mercy to the whole world as Allah SWT says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

"And We have not sent you, [Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds. "
(Surah Al-Anbiya', 104)

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