

## Relationship Between Religious Practices and Academic Achievement of Muslim Convert Students in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to identify the relationship of religious practices and its relationship to academic achievement of Muslim convert students in Malaysia by representing students from Malaysian Institute of Islamic Da'wah (MIID). A total of 200 students in MIID were randomly selected for this study. The findings of the descriptive analysis showed that overall faith and worship practices of the Muslim convert students have a lower mean level of faith (2.59) and religious (2.66), while the morals of students have a moderate level of mean (3.18). The results of Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant relationship between religious faith practices ( $r = .731$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), worship ( $r = .737$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and morals ( $r = .691$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with the academic achievement of Muslim convert students.

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### 1. Introduction

Educational development program in Malaysian Institute of Islamic Da'wah is in line with the objective of it establishing to give formal Islamic education to Muslim converts and their children with the main of allowing the group of Muslim convert students to understand and appreciate Islam as a way of life and be able to teach Islam and distributing among members of their own community (Marlon and Razaleigh 2014). Based on the objectives of Malaysian Institute of Islamic Da'wah, the educational programs use Malay language as the medium of instruction except for the subjects of the Quran and Arabic. Educational priority is given to the group of Muslim converts to produce a true Muslim personal whom tightly hold on his religion in addition of having excellent academic performance (Rosmani 2004). The evaluation of the students is made based on class attendance, adherence to the rules and achievement in course work and examinations (Syarul Azman and Razaleigh 2015). Meanwhile, students who meet the requirements and passed the examinations held by the school will be awarded a certificate according to the attended course (Razaleigh 2015) and later they will return to their hometown as a preacher for their own families and friends (Hazwan, Safinah and Zulkefli 2014).

### 2. Educational Programs in Malaysian Institute of Islamic Da'wah

Islamic Studies courses offered in Malaysian Institute of Islamic Da'wah under Malaysian Islamic

Welfare Organisation is divided into three stages, among which are:

#### 2.1 Preparatory Course for Islamic Studies

Preparatory Course for Islamic Studies is a program of study that provides opportunities for our brothers who do not have the ability and are not willing to follow the formal system of Islamic studies in Malaysia. This course provides a basic minimum of Islamic studies to a student before proceed to the next program (Nawi 2006). This course runs for 4 months but if a student wants to extend the period of study at this stage, it is subject to the approval of the Principal of Malaysian Institute of Islamic Da'wah (MIID) under Malaysian Islamic Welfare Organisation as long as the study period not exceeding two semesters (Qamarul and Safinah 2014).

#### 2.2 Basic Certificate in Islamic Studies

Basic Certificate in Islamic Studies is a program that offers the Muslim convert students with the basic education in Islamic studies for a year (2 semesters) to enable them to recognize and practice with true Islamic way of life. They will be exposed to the fundamentals of *fard ain*, Quran and Tajweed, sirah and basic knowledge of Arabic. The pre-requisite of this certificate must pass the Preparatory Course for Islamic Studies offered before except for students who already have a PMR (Lower Secondary Assessment) or equivalent qualification, including the evaluation from the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Da'wah under Malaysian Islamic Welfare Organisation principal (Anuar et. al. 2015).

### 2.3 Certificate in Islamic Studies

Certificate in Islamic Studies is a certification program that has been accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and the Public Service Department. The course curriculum is reviewed and formulated in accordance with the requirements and guidelines set by the MQA. For students who want to pursue SPM (Certificate Malaysian Assessment) must have at least got an honors or pass of the following Basic Certificate in Islamic Studies (A'throih 2013).

### 2.4 Living Skills

Instead of Islamic studies courses offered by the MIID, there are also living skills courses being offered to expose the students, especially new converts to the worldly wisdom. Some of living skills offered are related to computer science such as word, excel, power point and some basic information using internet access. In addition, vocational courses such as sewing and carpentry are also offered which is controlled by the lecturers and the Industrial Training Institute Kota Bharu aimed at educating the new converts in the field of living skills (Noraizan 2007).

### 2.5 Academic Courses

MIID provides convenience initial preparatory course for students who wish to sit for the SPM (Certificate Malaysian Assessment) and STPM (Higher Certificate Malaysian Assessment) with academic tutoring classes to enable students to continue their education in Higher Education Institutions in the country and abroad. Among the subjects offered for SPM are Mathematics, English, History, Science, Malay Language, Principles of Accounts, while General Education, Malay Literature and Malay Language for STPM. The allowances are given to the teachers which fully financed by MIID welfare fund without any charge being imposed on the students (Razaleigh 2011).

According to the report from 1975 to 2012, a total of 2,061 students had enrolled in MIID from various ethnic groups in Malaysia and also those from abroad. However, not all students manage to graduate as some of them have to stop because of marriage, work and some have failed to meet the requirements to continue his studies in MIID.

### 3. Methodology

This research is in quantitative form which involves 200 students at the MIID. Respondents were randomly selected. The questionnaire sets about religious practices consists of 40 items divided into three parts; question 1-10 are related to faith, while question 11-30 are associated with religion such as pillars of Islam, prayer and fasting. Question 31-40 are related to students' behaviour.

## 4. Findings

Respondent demography in this study consisted of age, gender, race, years of embracing Islam, marital status and academic qualifications. Demographic is important to know some important information in relation to the study.

### 4.1 Ages

The respondent's age of Muslim convert students in MIID is shown in Table 1.1. The age of respondents are categorized into six stages, under 18 years, 19-25 years, 26-30 years, 31-35 years, 36-40 years and 41 years and above. Results showed that of the total 200 respondents, the most of respondents are indicated by the group of 19-25 years with 61% (122 people) followed by the group under 18 years with 18% (36 people) while the smallest number of respondents is the group 41 years and above, with 2% (4 people), followed by the group of 31-35 years with 3% (6 people) and the group of 36-40 years with 4% (8 people) and the rest are represented by the group of 26-30 years with 12% (24 people). It showed that the converts with the age of 19-25 years are the most pursuing their studies in MIID while the lowest was in the group 41 years and above. However, based on Table 1.1, there is no limitation of age required for any Muslim convert students to continue his education in MIID provided that he has a high interest and willingness to pursue studies.

Table 1.1 The age distribution of Muslim convert students in MIID

Age category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
18 years and below	36	18
19-25 years	122	61
26-30 years	24	12
31-35 years	6	3
36-40 years	8	4
41 years and above	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

### 4.2 Gender

In terms of gender, the results indicated that most respondents in MIID consist of women by 57 percent while 43 percent of them are male. This shows that women group represents the majority, amounting to 114 people out of 200 respondents pursuing studies in MIID (Table 1.2). In this study, women are more interested in studying the Islamic courses in MIID compared to the male converts.

Table 1.2 The gender distribution of Muslim convert students in MIID

Category	Frequency(F)	Percentage (%)
Male	86	43
Female	114	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

### 4.3 Race

In terms of race, it is shown that Sabah ethnicity and aboriginal precedes the number of the converts who study in MIID. A total of 60 people (30%) represent Sabahan, while aboriginal consist of 58 people (29%) of the total number of 200 respondents. Followed by other nations such as Sarawakian with total of 26 people (13%), Indians 22 people (11%), non-citizens 18 people (9%) and Chinese 16 people (8%). The results showed that Sabah ethnics have dominated the population in MIID and it is almost equal to aboriginal. The least is Chinese nation (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3 The race distribution of Muslim convert students in MIID

Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Chinese	16	8
Indian	22	11
Sarawak ethnic	26	13
Sabah ethnic	60	30
Aboriginal	59	29
Non-citizen	18	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

### 4.4 Duration of Embracing Islam

Table 1.4 The distribution of duration of embracing Islam among Muslim convert students in MIID

Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
A year and below	48	24
2-3 years	78	39
4-5 years	40	20
6 years and above	34	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

Based on the answers given by the converts in MIID related to the years of converting to Islam (Table 1.4), majority of the respondents, a total of 78 people (39%) had embraced Islam between 2-3 years, a total of 48 people (24%) accepted Islam within a year and below, while a total of 40 people (20%) converted to Islam between 4-5 years and the remaining 34 respondents (17%) converted to Islam

within six years and above. The duration of 2-3 years of converting to Islam is sufficient as an indicator for a new Muslim to have high interest in Islam.

### 4.5 Marital Status

Table 1.5 shows that the majority of respondents were single with 184 people (92%), a total of 14 respondents (7%) are married and 2 respondents (1%) is a widower / widow. It is relevant if there is a significant difference in terms of the students' number based on marital status. There are some factors may contribute to this phenomenon as the single students are not busy as breadwinner and free from managing the family matters. The priority would easily be given to the study life compared to those whom are married.

Table 1.5 The distribution of marital status of Muslim convert students in MIID

Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Single	184	92
Married	14	7
Widow/widower	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

### 4.6 Academic Qualification

In Table 1.6, those who study in MIID come from different level of academic qualifications. The majority of respondents, 148 people (74%) are SPM / PMR holders, followed by 30 people (15%) reached the stage UPSR (Evaluation Test of Elementary School) / Evaluation Standard 5, while 20 people (10%) have a diploma / degree and 2 respondents (1%) has degree. It means that about 74% have chances to continue their education at a higher level after completing studies in MIID.

Table 1.6 The distribution of academic qualification of Muslim convert students in MIID

Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Degree	2	1
Diploma/STPM	20	10
SPM/PMR	148	74
UPSR/Evaluation Standard 5	30	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

### 4.7 Descriptive Findings of Religious Practises of Muslim Convert Students in MIID

This section discusses the descriptive of findings mean value and the level of faith, worship, morals. A likert scale from 1 to 5 has been used in the questionnaires of this study. In determining the level of the mean value for each variable, the author has categorized the min scores into 5 levels as shown in Table 1.7 below.

Table 1.7 Interpretation of score average in 5 levels (likert scale 5)

Average Score	Interpretation
1.00 to 1.89	Extremely low
1.90 to 2.69	Low
2.70 to 3.49	Medium
3.5 to 4.29	High
4.3 to 5.00	Extremley High

Source: Department of Planning and Research Educational Policy (2006)

#### 4.8 The Faith Level of Muslim Convert Students in MIID

Table 1.8 shows the findings of the religious practices of students in terms of faith. The mean value of faith of students is 2.59 in overall. This means that the overall level of student faith is at a low level (see interpretation of the mean values in Table 1.7). For every statement of faith shows three of them are at a medium level which statement I always remember God everyday (2.93 mean), I always follow the commands of God (2.70 mean) and always remember that God will be far away from those who commit sin. (2:56 mean). This means that students have a medium level of faith based on those statements. The practice of faith in terms of seven statements is at a low level.

Table 1.8 Mean value, standard deviation and level of faith

No.	Faith	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I always remember God everyday	2.93	0.61	Medium
2.	I often remember that anything happen is a test from God	2.40	0.80	Low
3.	I always remember the Day of Judgment	2.55	1.16	Low
4.	I am thankful once receiving grace from God	2.45	0.74	Low
5.	I hold Quran and Sunnah as a guidance in my life	2.40	0.74	Low
6.	I always remember death everyday	2.35	1.20	Low
7.	God always see what I do everyday	2.55	0.67	Low
8.	I always remember that all my action is recorded by the angels.	2.35	0.91	Low
9.	I always follow the commands of God	2.70	0.78	Medium
10.	I always remember that God will be far away from those who commit sin.	3.15	0.91	Medium
<b>Overall faith</b>		<b>2.59</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>Low</b>

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

#### 4.9 The Worship Level of t Muslim Convert Students in MIID

Table 1.9 shows the descriptive findings of mean value and the level of students' religious practices in terms of worship. The overall mean value worship is 2.45. This means that the overall level of student worship is at a low level. The detail findings of worship indicate five statements are at medium level; statement 'I always keep on praying (mean 3:55), I am fasting as required in Islam (mean 2.85), I will greet when I meet another person (mean 3.70), (3.70 mean) and statements of worship 'I know learning is a part of worship' (2.80 mean). This means that the practice of worship of students in terms of the five statements is at a medium level. However, the level of worship practises of other 10 students is at a low level.

Table 1.9: The mean value, standard deviation and level of worship

No.	Worship	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I always keep on praying	3.55	0.59	Medium
2.	Even though I am busy, I will recite Quran every day.	1.65	0.91	Low
3.	I discuss with my family for any matter related to religion.	2.30	1.15	Low
4.	I often perform <i>sunat</i> prayer before and after prayer.	1.65	0.91	Low
5.	I am fasting as required in Islam	2.85	0.79	Medium
6.	I recite doa after prayer	2.00	0.90	Low
7.	I greet when I meet other person	3.70	0.56	Low
8.	I do not the fast during Ramadhan month without reason	3.70	0.56	Medium
9.	I love to perform congregational prayer with my family members	2.55	0.98	Low
10.	Once I miss the fasting, I will replace the day.	1.90	0.77	Low
11.	I will be sad once the month of Ramadhan ends.	1.15	0.36	Low
12.	I participate in charity works.	2.25	0.83	Low
13.	I divide my daily routine into three parts; time for God, for myself and for family.	2.35	0.86	Low
14.	I practise the sunnah of Prophet SAW in my daily life.	2.30	0.64	Low
15.	I know learning is a part of worship	2.80	0.75	Medium
<b>Overall worship</b>		<b>2.45</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>Low</b>

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

#### 4.10 The Moral Level of Muslim Convert Students in MIID

Table 1.10 shows descriptive findings in terms of the mean, standard deviation and moral level of the students. The mean of moral as a whole is 3.18, which means that the overall level of student morals is at a medium level. All the statements of morals are in medium level except for the statement 'I maintain the boundaries between male and female promiscuity (mean 2.50) is at low level.

No.	Moral	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I maintain the boundaries between male and female promiscuity.	2.50	0.92	Low
2.	I refrain myself from doing prohibited deeds	2.85	1.11	Medium
3.	I refrain myself from compromising with the bad person.	3.10	0.89	Medium
4.	I never take someone else without prior approval.	3.45	1.03	Medium
5.	I thank to my friends for their help	3.65	0.79	Medium
6.	I like to be friend with those people who can guide me towards goodness	3.45	0.98	Medium
7.	I do not worry when I send SMS / email or talk bad to other people.	2.85	0.73	Medium
8.	I skip the class.	3.15	1.06	Medium
9.	I watch pornography.	2.70	0.64	Medium
10.	I damage school property.	3.55	0.59	Medium
11.	I apologize if I made a mistake	3.60	0.49	Medium
12.	I showed anger, when someone does not accept my point of view.	2.75	0.54	Medium
13.	I give more attention to my friends than family	3.45	0.87	Medium
14.	I do anything being asked by my family cheerfully	3.40	0.67	Medium
15.	When I am angry with my parents, I would be rude to them	3.30	0.64	Medium
<b>Overall moral</b>		<b>3.18</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>Medium</b>

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

#### 5. The Relationship Between the Religious Practices and Academic Achievement

The Pearson correlation was used to analyze the relationship between faith, worship and morals with academic achievement. Pearson correlation suits to be used for continuous data, the average value or ratio data. The result in Table 1.11 shows that there is a significant correlation between a high level of student faith ( $r = .731$  and  $\text{sig.} = .00 < .01$ ), student worship ( $r = .737$  and  $\text{sig.} = .00 < .01$ ) with the academic achievement of the Muslim convert students while

the relationship between students morals ( $r = .691$  and  $\text{sig.} = .00 < .01$ ) is at a medium level. The findings indicate that faith, worship and morals have a positive relationship with the academic achievement.

#### 6. Findings Discussion

The previous analyzed data were discussed based on the contribution of religious practices which are of faith, worship and moral towards the academic achievement of the Muslim convert students.

Table 1.11 The relationship between the religious practices and academic achievement

The relationship between two variables	Value of r	Sig.	Interpretation
Faith and academic achievement of Muslim converts	.731	.000	High
Worship and academic achievement of Muslim converts	.737	.000	High
Morals and academic achievement of Muslim converts	.691	.000	Medium

Source: Questionnaires (2015)

#### 6.1 Faith and Academic Achievement of Muslim Convert Students

The results of this study showed that there was a significant relationship between the faith practice and academic achievement of the students ( $r = .731$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while the descriptive findings of the overall mean for poor students in term of faith practises as a whole is (2.59). It shows the faith practises of those students are low. The findings of this study in particular have shown that Muslim convert students are weak in terms of faith, especially in considering that what is happening is an attempt of God, remembering the Day of Judgment, give thanks to God when receiving a favour, make the Quran and

Hadith as a guidance in daily life, every day of remembrance of the death, God sees what is done at all times, be aware that the acts committed are recorded by Angel and followed the commands of God.

#### 6.2 Worship and Academic Achievement of Muslim Convert Students

The results of this study showed that there was a significant relationship between religious practices and academic achievement of the students ( $r = .737$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while the descriptive findings of overall mean value of worship practices is at low level (2.66). This shows that religious practices of Muslim convert students are low. The study found that students'



religious practices are particularly weak in praying, reading the Quran every day, perform prayers before and after praying, praying each time after prayers, greeting when he meets other people, fasting in Ramadan without excuse, perform congregational prayers with family, leaving fasting and replace the day, felt sad when the end of the month of Ramadhan, joined the charity works, dividing the daily lives of three parts: time to God (special worship), time to learn, time to themselves and society, practicing the *sunnah* of Muhammad SAW in everyday life and know learning is a part of worship. The findings showed that Muslim convert students are indirectly do not realize that seeking knowledge is a religious practice and if it is not accompanied by the proper intention will lead to poor achievements in their academic studies.

### 6.3 Morals and Academic Achievement of Muslim Convert Students

The results of this study showed that there was a significant relationship between supervision of teachers with academic achievement of the students ( $r = .691, p < 0.01$ ), while finding descriptive in terms of the mean, standard deviation and the level of student morals. The mean of moral as a whole is (3.18), this means that the moral level of Muslim convert students is in medium level. In term of moral awareness, although the overall of students practises is in medium level but they less maintain the social boundaries between the opposite genders, refrain from doing evil things and not worry when he send a SMS / email or talk bad to other people.

### 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides a preliminary picture about the level of religious practices that are faith, worship and morals of Muslim convert students which can influent the academic achievement of the respondents. This study proves scientifically through systematic rules on the opinions of Muslim scholars associated with the benefits of knowing and practicing the faith, worship and morals aspects. The results obtained led to some of the implications of the situation faced in life, especially the education practises.

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