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

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background and Purpose**: Islam is a way of life that needs to be practised in all areas of Muslims' life. 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 that needs to be guided and educated so that they can truly practice the teachings of Islam. The aim of this study is to explain the effectiveness of Islamic education on the Islamic religiosity of *Muallaf*.

**Methodology**: This qualitative study used an interview approach on a total of 25 *Muallaf* from 5 zones, namely the North Zone (Kedah), East Coast (Terengganu), West Coast (Selangor), South (Johor) and Sabah (East Malaysia). In addition, interviews with four (4) figures who are directly involved in the management of *Muallaf* were also conducted.

**Findings**: The results of the study highlighted several aspects emphasized in the Islamic education of *Muallaf* which are the basics of faith, prayer education, implementation of fasting, reciting the Qur'an and the issues that concerned Islamic behavior. *Muallaf* needs to spend a certain period to improve themselves as a true Muslim.

**Conclusion and Contributions**: The results of this study 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.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Religiosity is an important aspect for human beings due to its great influence on behavior, practice and personality, 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 *fardu kifayah* (a legal obligation that must be discharged by the Muslim community 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, are able to 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, matters relating to Islamic religious affairs are placed under the state government. 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 own syllabus for providing Islamic education to *Muallaf*. Thus, the different syllabus may cause *Muallafs* to understand Islam from different views. At the same time, *Muallafs* require a certain period to ensure they can implement the demands of the Islamic teachings and religiosity effectively. The study conducted by Shaharuddin et al. (2018) showed that there is 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 if *Muallafs* fail to adapt the Islamic values which will cause them to return to their former belief and practice. The study conducted by Muhammad et al. (2018) found that a total of 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 to bring changes in behavior, attitude and knowledge, improve human skills that can further be benefitted to steer national development (Ishak & Kamarudin, 2019).  There are several Arabic terms that 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 to be used in the context of Islamic religious education. Under Islamic perspectives, education does not only transfer information from a teacher to a student, but also it 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 Shaharudin (2012) explain that the concept of Islamic education is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, and it should be related to faith in Allah SWT. Based on the above statement, it can be emphasized that the concept of Islamic education does not only increase understanding, but also strengthen the confidence, appreciation, and practice of the Islamic teachings based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

The effectiveness of the understanding and appreciation of Islamic education has a lot to do with teaching and learning (T&L) 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, behavioral and cognitive engagement practices have affected as crucial elements to be directly influential towards overall students' engagement (Halif et al., 2020). The traditional method of delivery of Islamic education is implemented in the form of sermons, questions and answers, and discussions, whereas the current methods include doing assignments, doing experiments and demonstrations, facilitating and problem-solving (Ahyat, 2017). Islamic education is significant in developing the attitudes and ways of thinking, individual mental, the resilience of the struggle of self-awareness, and understanding of 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 (*siffat mazmumah)*

The firmness of a Muslim's religiosity is closely related to the effectiveness of the Islamic education delivery. Thus, Arolah and Ismail (2019) state that religiosity is a reflection of Islamic education that has been 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 followed "*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 behavior 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 the 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 refers to a process of internalizing religious beliefs and teachings. It can be manifested in various forms such as ceremonies, prayers, worships, and even the formation of behaviors that relate to daily routines based on the teachings held.

Muallaf is defined as a group that has just embraced Islam or is known as the 'new brother', 'our brother' or Muslim convert (*Kamus Dewan*). While in the dictionary of Lisān Al-ᶜArab, the word *Muallaf* is taken from the basic word *a-li-fa* (ألف) which means gentle, kind and loving. Meanwhile, 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 which transforms the way the individual perceives the rest of the society and his or her personal 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 as *Muallafat al-Qalub*. They are the newly converted Muslims, who deserve to be given zakat as a means of giving full co-operation in contributing to and strengthening Islam since they might have lost their previous properties, and therefore need assistance and encouragement. Similarly, those who go aggressively against Islam, but by giving zakat, it may stop them from doing so (Johari et al., 2014). Financial helps may strengthen their beliefs (faiths) and their sense of belonging to the Muslim Ummah.

Rasinah (2012) categorised Muallafs into three groups in appreciating religion based on periods, namely the period of 1-5 years (study period), period of 6-10 years (adjustment period), and the period of 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 were 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* in accordance with 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.

In order to instill understanding to the 'newly converts' to Islam, education is one of the effective mediums in applying understanding to *Muallafs* so that they can gain knowledge about this new religion. Systematic and structured education can not only attract *Muallafs* to understand the teachings of Islam but also build their confidence in the truth of the religion that 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 there are among the *Muallafs* who return to the original teachings because they feel difficulties in practising Islamic teachings due to the improper process of learning and teaching as well as its unsuitability to the levels of *Muallafs*.

Abu Bakar and Ismail (2018) stated that the Islamic education of a *Muallaf* is very important to fulfill spiritual needs. Through spiritual strength, it will lead to a good life for the *Muallaf*. Mustafa, Jaafar, and Ali (2017) showed that there are some problems faced by *Muallafs* such as lack of Islamic knowledge, emotional stress and surrounding conditions that do not help. This study suggests the need for an effective *Muallaf* study module to increase the knowledge of Islam among *Muallafs*. While Kasim, Abdul Hamid, and Jemali (2017) emphasize the importance of understanding the subject of faith. Hussin et al. (2019) stated that education for Muallafs is not only limited to the study of faith, jurisprudence (*Syariah*), morality (*akhlak*), al-Qu'ran and Hadith knowledge only, but it should also study of Arabic language in order to help them to appreciate the Islamic teaching, especially related to the worship performed. Therefore, based on past studies Islamic education is a paramount aspect that must be emphasized and given to the *Muallafs*, especially aspects of faith, worship and others.

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

Data in this study were obtained through qualitative research and was a face-to-face individual interview guide. The field studies were conducted in 4 zones, namely at the  Darul Hidayah *Muallaf* Training Center, Kuala Terengganu (East Zone), *Muallaf* Training Center at PERKIM Johor Bharu (Southern Zone), *Muallaf* Training Center at PERKIM (West Zone) and *Muallaf* Training Center at PERKIM Penang (Northern Zone). In order to obtain more clear and detailed information, the researchers further conducted a semi-structured interview with 20 participants at *Muallaf* Training Centers. From the interview, participants can explain the information based

on their views. The researcher can indirectly see the real situation and establish a close relationship with the participants. Their identity was portrayed as anonymous and kept secret in order to sustain the validity and honesty of their responses. The selection of participants were also based on their willingness to participate in this study. Four officers who were directly involved in the management of *Muallafs* were also interviewed in that place. From that, the researchers obtained general information on matters that affect the phenomenon of conversion to Islam, the assistance provided and the challenges faced in managing the education of *Muallaf*s. The interviews were conducted in a very conducive and quiet room. An audio recorder was also used to record the entire session was ranged from one to two hours.

Interview guides were developed using open-ended questions and all the questions were content validated by the experts from the field of Muslim Convert. A pilot study is done to help researchers refine the planning to collect data such as modifying the items according to the comments given by the participants, determining the type required and the process to be followed while collecting data. In addition, through a pilot study, researchers can check the validity of the instruments used and find out the constraints that exist when the data collection process is carried out. The interview questions were tested until the answers given by the participants were really seen consistent. Before the interview was conducted, a permission letter for research is written to Religious Officer in respect of a request letter for conducting a research program in a certain field of interest. The inclusion of research participants stopped after data saturation was met. As such, the sample selection was purposive in nature, reflecting the population of interest.

Next, with answers recorded, researchers are able to code, classify, and annotate sound bites instead of transcribing interviews and then working with the resulting text. Thus, the recordings must be transcribed verbatim before data analysis can begin. To facilitate the analysis, the researcher divided the answers based on themes. The findings are classified according to the specified characteristics which include the background of the informants, their perceptions of educational methods of delivery, factors *Muallaf* decided to get Islamic education, the role experience in learning and their attitude toward learning Islamic Studies. The confidentially of information was maintained throughout the study through the use of codes Informant#1 till 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 below:

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. The majority of the informants were married and chosen 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 work in Malaysia.

**4.2 *Muallaf* Religiosity**

The findings of this study discuss the main themes that can be identified from the interview transcription of the participants. A total of five main themes were identified as indicators to illustrate the effects of Islamic education on religiosity among *Muallafs* which are 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*

The concept of 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 look at some aspects of divinity that are quite difficult to be understood. Education on faith further strengthens the conversion of Muslims to Islam. For sure, 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 a supernatural thing. 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 of 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 that is newly exposed to the basic concepts of faith. These groups also need to 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 the method of performing prayers. The implementation of good prayers requires the completion of intentions, readings and all the movements included in it. At the initial stage of the Muslim prayer, not every *Muallafs* had 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* only. 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 of 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, most *Muallaf*s 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 who live 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 *munaja*t (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, there were still some of the informants who took it easy in keeping 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 the time of 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 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 were unable to do fasting due to illness, had a weak constitution and travel, the *Muallafs* did not finish the 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

newly in Islam. This is because they have practised fasting before being 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 from an early age 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 understand and master 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 6 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 did 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, they 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 own 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 is given the opportunity to continue their studies at Institut Dakwah Islamiah PERKIM (IDIP). Apart from that, there are *Muallafs* who took the initiative to learn al-Qur'an through YouTubes 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 (Akhlak) in Social Relations

Under Islamic perspectives, religion is a framework that supports the entire social system in society. The goal is to gain self-power in the development of potential and skills, vision and resources available to make decisions and take action on 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 including things that are considered superstitious. *Muallafs* are a group that once lived together in a non-Muslim community. Islamic education does not only teach 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 are commonly done by an original Muslim. 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 who are growing up in a risky environment are more susceptible to unhealthy activities. Taking into account the various risks that would be faced if social space occurred in the life of the original family and community, *Muallafs* decided to choose a place to live in another area. For Informant#4, environmental factors are able to stimulate oneself to appreciate Islamic values in their daily life. 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 has attempted to fulfil the requirements of the *Muallafs*, particularly in the field of social relations with non-Muslim family so that they can achieve happiness. Islam provides an example of tolerance and inter and intra-communal respect as well as a teaching of great knowledge. Thus, everything that contributes to a conflict between *Muallaf* with 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-Muslim 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 further able to contribute to the development and well-being of the country.

*Sharia* education is a very important lesson that addresses social relations between men and women in Islam. This is a very 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 to 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 that are considered mandatory by believers and are 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:
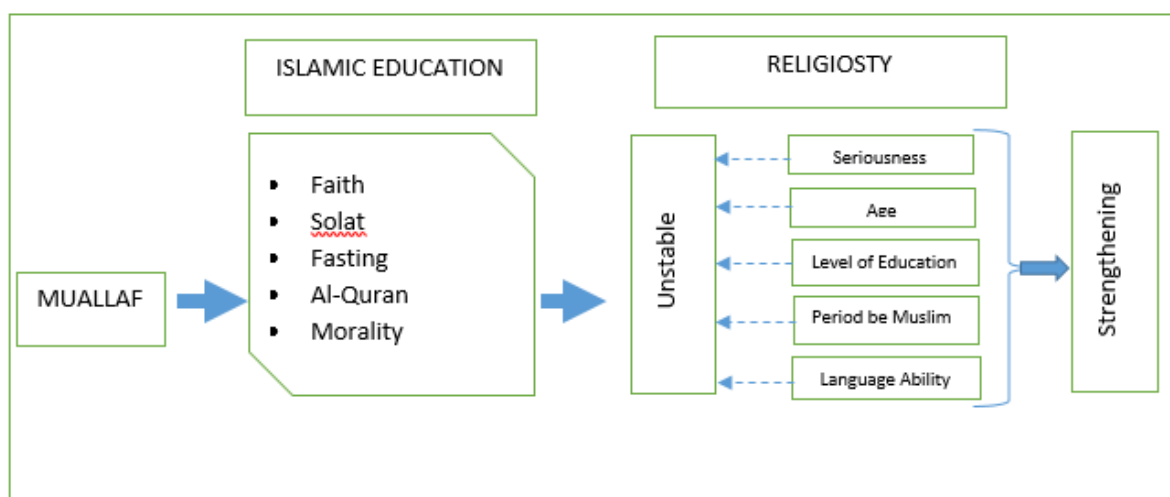


Figure 1: Islamic education and *Muallaf's* religiosity

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The dynamics of Islamic education on the *Muallaf* community's religiosity have a variety of 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 the implementation of 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 in understanding and

subsequently appreciating the teachings of Islam. 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

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