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THE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF ISLAM AMONG ORANG ASLI NEW MUSLIMS IN SELANGOR STATE, MALAYSIA AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIAL WELL-BEING

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Abstract. To understand Islam and practice it in daily life are two different things. However, both are equally important in determining one's quality of Islam. On the basis of this fact, this paper aimed to measure the level of understanding and appreciation of Islam among Orang Asli New Muslims (Indigenous People) in Selangor State of Malaysia and how it is related to social well-being. This paper, however, will only focus on the level of understanding and appreciation of Islam in aqeedah aspect. A Descriptive quantitative research was employed in gaining the actual finding regarding the understanding and practicing of Islam among Orang Asli New Muslims Mawdoodi (2006: p.396). The study found that, the level of understanding and appreciation of Islam among Orang Asli New Muslims in Selangor is high with overall mean for aqidah (creed) = 2.92. This aqeedah aspect is seen to be related to producing Orang Asli social well-being in Malaysia particularly in Selangor.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Carey (1976, p.3) the term 'Orang Asli' which is the Malay word is used for 'aborigines'. He further suggests that the word orang merely means 'people' and the term 'Asli' comes from Arabic word 'asali', meaning well-born or aristocratic. It was decided accordingly that the Malay term, 'Orang Asli' should be used even in English correspondence. The term 'Orang Asli' has been well received by the aborigines, and it has, by now, become widely used and firmly established. The Orang Asli are minority group and consist 0.8% of Malaysian population. Asian Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Network 2008 statistic reveals that the total number of Orang Asli in Malaysia is 178,197 (Asian Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Network, 2008). A source from Department of Islamic Advancement Malaysia, 2007 recorded that some 30,000 of them are Muslim. In Selangor, the total number of Orang Asli are 17,587 people of which the total number of Muslims is 2638. A source from Selangor Islamic Religious Council shows that there are 543 Orang Asli converted to Islam between the year 2010-2013. Selangor Islamic Religious Council is a body which caters to and takes care of Orang Asli New Muslims affairs.

A lot have been written concerning da'wah to Orang Asli. Don (2014) in the article "Penghayatan Islam Dakwah Orang Asli" suggests that it is very important for Orang Asli to understand Islam and practice it. Their understanding and practicing Islam would produce a model to be followed by Orang Asli Non-

Muslims. Jamian (2013) in his study on the life standard of Orang Asli found that among the factors why Orang Asli could not understand and practice Islam well is because they lack motivation of learning. This article is a further study to know the level of their understanding and practicing of Islam among Orang Asli New Muslims in Selangor.

METHODOLOGY

Some 261 respondents were chosen among New Muslims Orang Asli in Selangor as participants to answer the questionnaires in order to gain the actual figure related to their understanding and practicing of Islam. Researchers have carried out a pilot study on 50 people who were New Muslims Orang Asli in Sungai Lalang, Semenyih on March 12, 2014 to obtain the validity and reliability of the instrument. This pilot study is a trial before the real test of the instrument distributed to the real sample. The purpose of the pilot study is to obtain data from trial's transparency through small group of individuals (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2013). According to Konting (1997), level $\alpha = 0.71 - 0.99$ is the best level because it is a measure of the reliability of the item by the sample (Konting 1997, p. 182). Reliability test was conducted to test the reliability of the measurement instruments used. Based on statistical methods, the closer the value of Alpha Cronbach (α) to 1, the higher its internal consistency. Table 1 indicates the reliability of measurement instruments.

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TABLE 1
Value of Cronbach Alpha and Reliability Tools

Value of Cronbach Alpha (α)	Reliability
Less than 0.6	Weak
0.6 to 0.8	Acceptable
More than 0.8	Good

Source: Sekaran (1992)

Overall, based on a pilot study that was conducted on 50 Orang Asli New Nuslims in Sungai Lalang, Semenyih found that respondents can understand the questionnaires and answer them easily. Reliability of the items raised in the questionnair meets a = .70 >. Overall, the results of the pilot study found that respondents can understand the questionnaire and answer easily and the results are as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Overall Results of the Reliability Test Pilot Study

Variable	Item No	α
Part B	30	0.945
Part C	14	0.867

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study can be divided into two aspects as follows:

- a) Respondent Demography
- b) The Level of Understanding and Practising Islam

Respondents' Demographic Profile

The study involved five districts within the state of Selangor, Hulu Langat, Gombak, Kuala Langat and Sepang. Respondents were 261 New Muslims Orang Asli segregated by demographic characteristics such as gender, age, region, ethnic group, marital status, occupation, education level, duration of conversion to Islam, sources of information about the teachings of Islam, the estimated distance from home to the sources of information about Islam and the ability to speak and understand Bahasa Melayu. To analyze demography, studies conducted with descriptive analysis included frequencies and percentages. Demographic profile of the study is shown in Table 3 below.

The findings based on Table 3 show that the age of the respondents, the majority of a total of 90 patients (34.5%) were converted Aboriginal aged 31 to 40 years, a total of 88 respondents (33.7%) aged over 41 years, a total of 64 respondents (24.5%) aged 21 to 30 years and 19 individuals (7.3%) who converted Aboriginal aged less than 20 years. While gender shows that 181 respondents (69.3%) were female and 80 respon-

dents (30.7%) were male. Next, based on the area of living: 87 respondents (33.3%) lived in Sepang, a total of 83 respondents (31.8%) lived in Hulu Langat, a total of 44 respondents (16.9%) lived in Petaling, a total of 28 respondents (10.7%) lived in Gombak while the remaining 19 respondents (7.3%) lived in Kuala Langat. Place of residence of respondents was divided into 5 regions as representing muallaf Aboriginal population in the state. Next, based on a total of 239 tribal respondents, (91.6%) represent the Temuan tribes and the remaining total of 22 respondents (8.4%) represent Mahmeri tribes. By marital status, 191 respondents (73.2%) are married, a total of 39 respondents (14.9%) single and a total of 31 respondents (11.9%) are Widow / Widower.

While from the point of occupation, a total of 128 respondents (49.1%) who were Aboriginal did not work, a total of 84 respondents (32.2%) were self-employed, a total of 41 respondents (15.7%) worked with Private companies and a group of 8 respondents (25.2%) was employed by the Government. Next by level of education, a total of 96 respondents (36.8%) hold UPSR, a total of 79 respondents (30.3%) have no education, a total of 52 respondents (19.9%) are PMR holder, a total of 26 respondents (10.0%) hold SPM while respondents who graduated with a Diploma / STPM were only 6 people (2.3%) and a total of 2 respondents (0.8%) graduated with Degree.

Furthermore, based on the period of embracing Islam showed that a total of 168 respondents (64.4%) who were Aboriginal converted to Islam in six years and above, a total of 39 respondents (14.9%) converted to Islam in 4-5 years, a total of 34 respondents (13.0%) converted to Islam in 2-3 years and a total of 20 respondents (7.7%) converted to Islam in under one year. While based on Islamic sources of information about the results showed a total of 211 respondents (80.8%) received information through classes / lectures on religion, a total of 29 respondents (11.1%) through the Malay people, a total of 10 respondents (3.8%) obtained information about Islam through Television, a total of 8 respondents (3.1%) obtained information about Islam through reading material and the remaining total of three respondents (1.1%) obtained information about Islam through the internet.

TABLE 3
Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demography	Frequency	Percentage	Demography	Frequency	Percentage
Age			Gender		
Less than 20	19	7.3%	Male	80	30.7%
21 to 30	64	24.5%	Female	181	69.3%
31 to 40	90	34.5%	Ethnic group		
More than 41	88	33.7%	Temuan	239	91.6%
District			Mahmeri	22	8.4%
Petaling	44	16.9%	Marital status		
Hulu Langat	83	31.8%	Single	39	14.9%
Gombak	28	10.7%	Married	191	73.2%
Kuala Langat	19	7.3%	Widow/Widower	31	11.9%
Selangor	87	33.3%	Level of education		
Occupation			Degree	2	0.8%
Government servant	8	3.1%	Diploma/STPM	6	2.3%
Private	41	15.7%	SPM	26	10.0%
Self employed	84	32.2%	PMR	52	19.9%
Unemployed	128	49.1%	UPSR	96	36.8%
Duration of conversion to Islam			No formal education	79	30.3%
Less than 1 year	20	7.7%	Able to converse and understand Bahasa Melayu		
2-3 years	34	13.0%	Yes	257	98.5%
4-5 years	39	14.9%	No	4	1.5%
More than 6 years	168	64.4%	Estimated distance from home to the sources of information about Islam		
Source of information about Islam			Less than 1 Km	221	84.7%
Class/religious lecture	211	80.8%	1-2Km	21	8.0%
Malay people	29	11.1%	3-4Km	7	2.7%
Television	10	3.8%	More than 4 Km	12	4.6%
Internet	3	1.1%			
Reading materials	8	3.1%			

Next, based on the estimated distance from home to Islam sources of information indicates that a total of 221 respondents (84.7%) lived within less than 1 Km distance, a total of 21 respondents (8.0%) lived about 1-2 km away, a total of 12 respondents (4.6%) lived at about 4 Km distance or more and a total of 7 respondents (2.7%) lived at about 3-4 Km distance. While based on the ratio of the ability to speak and understand Malay, 257 respondents (98.5%) stated that they can afford and

understand Malay, and the remaining of 4 respondents (1.5%) who are converted indigenous people are not able to speak and understand the Malay language.

Independent t test analysis was carried out to identify differences in the understanding and appreciation of Islam among the Orang Asli in the state based on gender. Results of independent t test analysis are shown in the table 4 below.

TABLE 4
Independent t test Differences

Gender	N	Min	S. D	t	Df	Sig.
Male	80	2.96	.93	.185	259	0.706
Female	81	2.93	.93			

Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in the understanding and appreciation of Islam among the Orang Asli in the state based on sex with $t = .185$ and $\text{sig} = 0.706$ ($p > 0.05$).

In terms of mean it showed men (mean = 2.96) have an understanding and appreciation of religion higher than that among women (mean = 2.93) but the difference was not significant.

Analysis of Findings

In this study a set of questionnaire uses three scales, namely Disagree (TS), Not Sure (TP) and agree (S) to assess the inter-

pretation of measurement. Mean values are illustrated in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Interpretation Value for the Measurement of Mean Value

Mean value	Interpretation
0.0 to 1.0	Low
1.1 to 2.0	Moderate
2.1 to 3.0	High

Analysis of the findings is described in accordance with the objectives stated in the previous section. Analysis of the findings is presented in detail as follows:

Levels of Understanding and Appreciation of Aqeedah of Orang Asli in Selangor

Islamic teaching contains three major aspects related to Muslim life, namely aqeedah, ibadah and akhlak. Wehr and Cowan (1979) indicates that the term of aqeedah is derived from Arabic word 'aqada' to mean 'knot' or 'tie'. In reaction to this, aqeedah could be understood as article of faith, tenet, doctrine, dogma, faith, believe and conviction.

The principle articles of faith in Islamic teaching are belief in the Oneness of God, belief in all the messengers of God, belief

in all scriptures and revelations of God, belief in the angels of God, belief in the last day of judgment and belief in fate and predestination (Abdalati, 1993).

This part reveals the descriptive analysis involving frequency, percentage, mean and mode conducted to determine the level of understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal converts to Islam in aqeedah aspect. The descriptive analysis of the results can be seen in Table 6.

To determine the level of understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal converts in terms of belief, a matter-related questions with the tenets of the faith as belief in One God, the testimony, the belief in angels, the Prophets and the Resurrection Day have been asked to study participants. The findings can be clearly seen in Table 6 below.

TABLE 6
Level of Understanding and Appreciation of Aboriginal Converts to Islam From the Aspects of Aqidah

No	Item	TS	TP	S	Mode	Mean	Interpretation
1	I believe in one God	0 (0%)	5(1.9%)	256 (98.1%)	3.0	2.98	High
2	I understand the meaning of Shahada	0 (0%)	23 (8.8%)	238 (91.2%)	3.0	2.91	High
3	I believe Muslims are obliged to follow the Prophetic wisdom	0 (0%)	25 (9.6%)	236 (90.4%)	3.0	2.90	High
4	I believe in the existence of angels and their duties	0 (0%)	22(8.4%)	239 (91.6%)	3.0	2.91	High
5	I understand the obligation to have faith on all the apostles	2(0.8%)	23 (8.8%)	236 (90.4%)	3.0	2.89	High
6	I am sure of the existence of Hereafter / Hour / Vengeance Day	2 (0.8%)	10 (3.8%)	249 (95.4%)	3.0	2.94	High
7	I am sure of the reward for the doers of good and sin of those who do evil	1(0.4%)	12 (4.6%)	248 (95.0%)	3.0	2.94	High
8	I believe Muslims are obliged to abstain from thing that can bring shirk such as wearing talismans and magic	4 (1.5%)	17 (6.5%)	240 (92.0%)	3.0	2.90	High
	Overall					2.92	High

Table 6 above shows that each item in the understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal converted to Islam from the aspect of faith is at high level. Item that has the highest mean is that I believe in one God (mean = 2.98) that remained at a high level. The frequencies and percentages indicate that a total of 256 respondents (98.1%) agreed and a total of 5 respondents (1.9%) were not sure. While the item that has the lowest mean is that I understand the duty of believers to all the apostles (mean = 2.89). The frequencies and percentages indicate that a total of 236 respondents (90.4%) agreed, a total of 23 respondents

(8.8%) expressed uncertainty and a total of 2 respondents (.8%) disagreed. Overall indicates that the understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal converted to Islam from the aspect of faith are at high level (mean = 2.92). Similarly, the mode of study results showed that overall respondents chose the answer agree (mode = 3.0) on every item question asked from them.

CONCLUSION

The findings generally indicate that the level of understanding and appreciation of Islam among Orang Asli in Selangor State

in aqeedah aspect is high with the mean score revealing 2.92. This finding shows that they are strong believers and understand about matters related to the pillars of faith. This high level of understanding and appreciation of Islam related to aqeedah matters will contribute to a better wellness of Orang Asli. This is due to the aspect of aqeedah considered as important factor to produce social well-being. Matters related to the challenges in understanding Islam as stated in the findings of this study should be considered in formulating a more effective form of

action towards enabling them to understand Islam properly and then practiced in everyday life.

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— This article does not have any appendix. —

APPENDIX

Results of the Pilot Study with Regard to the Reliability of Measurement Instruments

No.	Variable Item	α	Reliability
B1	I believe in one God	.944	Good
B2	I understand the meaning of Shahada	.942	Good
B3	I believe Muslims are obliged to follow the Prophetic wisdom	.944	Good
B4	I believe the existence of angels and their duties	.944	Good
B5	I understand the obligation to have faith on all the apostles	.942	Good
B6	I am sure of the existence of Hereafter / Hour / Vengeance Day	.944	Good
B7	I am sure of the reward for the doers of good and sin of those who do evil	.944	Good
B8	I believe Muslims are obliged to abstain thing that can bring shirk such as wearing talismans and magic	.944	Good
B9	I know the duties of prayer	.943	Good
B10	I perform the obligatory prayers five times with consistency	.941	Good
B11	I perform my Friday prayers every week	.948	Good
B12	I perform my tarawih prayer	.942	Good
B13	I perform my Eid ul Fitr and Adha prayer annually	.942	Good
B14	I fast in the month of Ramadan	.943	Good
B15	I would perform my ablution before prayers	.944	Good
B16	I know how to perform ablution	.942	Good
B17	I know the things that invalidate the prayer	.942	Good
B18	I know the things that invalidate the fast	.942	Good
B19	I know how to read the Qur'an	.947	Good
B20	I know how to recite surah al-Fatihah	.944	Good
B21	I know how to perform obligatory bath	.942	Good
B22	I know about divorce and talak in Islam	.942	Good
B23	I obey my parents	.944	Good
B24	I respect older people	.944	Good
B25	I practice mutual assistance	.942	Good
B26	I always speak the truth	.943	Good
B27	I do not steal because it is haram and sinful	.944	Good
B28	I stay away from alcohol, gambling, lottery because it is haram and sinful	.944	Good
B29	I will greet my fellow Muslims	.943	Good
B30	I do not gossip, slander because it is a sin	.943	Good
C1	I do not understand the teachings of Islam as I do not know how to read / speak / write in Bahasa Melayu	.889	Good
C2	I do not understand the teachings of Islam as I am not interested in taking classes	.844	Good
C3	I do not understand the teachings of Islam as I was blocked / rejected by my own family members	.843	Good
C4	I do not understand the teachings of Islam because there is no time for it	.846	Good
C5	I do not understand the teachings of Islam as no friend / family member who wants to learn together	.842	Good
C6	Wield the pronouncement of consent and qabul (I buy or sell) during a transaction	.842	Good
C7	I do not understand the teachings of Islam and to appreciate it as the village atmosphere does not allow me to understand and appreciate Islam	.842	Good
C8	I do not understand the teachings of Islam because of financial problems	.842	Good
C9	I do not understand and appreciate the teachings of Islam because there are no facilities for learning such as mosque / class / town hall	.859	Good
C10	I do not understand the teachings of Islam because there is no transport	.879	Good
C11	I do not understand the teachings of Islam as the instructors / mentors from outside are not / rarely present	.881	Good
C12	I do not understand the teachings of Islam because of what is taught is hard to understand	.874	Good
C13	I do not understand the teachings of Islam as there is no manual / module	.860	Good
C14	I do not understand the teachings of Islam as the instructor was not able to give lessons efficiently	.865	Good