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Research Article

THE IMPLICATION OF ZAKAT DISTRIBUTION IN STRENGTHENING THE FAITH AMONG CONVERTS IN SELANGOR

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ABSTRACT

The enforcement of *zakat* distribution is based on the principle and concept which have been assigned through Islamic law that will give a big impact on strengthening the faith among converts. This study is done to identify the implication of the *zakat* distribution on the strengthening of faith among converts in Selangor. It was also done to analyse the relationship between the strengthening of faith among converts with certain education level. Hence, this study was done quantitatively which involves 454 converts as respondents were chosen through the random sampling in order to get the data for the study. The descriptive analysis showed that the *zakat* distribution and the level of faith among converts in Selangor are at a high level, with values of 4.71 and 3.99 respectively. The descriptive analysis that involves mean and standard deviation showed that converts with a higher level of education has a higher impact of *zakat* distribution compared to ones with a lower level of education.

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INTRODUCTION

Converts are defined as a group of people that have converted to Islam and make a lot of efforts to be more Islamic because they feel that their faith is still weak (al-Qaradawi, 1993; Ibrahim & Daiman, 2010). According to al-Mazini (1989: 151-152), the definition of convert as follows:

Groups receiving the Islamic guidance that fulfil two criteria. Firstly, recently converting to Islam without exceeding a one year period unless in situations under the consideration of the authorities. It is limited in such a way because according to the norm, these converts are still perceived to require dependency in the one year term, after converting to Islam. Secondly, they require assistance in facing a new situation.

Those who are interested in Islam, including the converts. Hopefully, with the gift of *zakat*, it will encourage more people to convert to Islam and give impact to others to also convert.

According to the Quran, sura *al-Tawbah* verse 60, it has ordered the Muslims to distribute *zakat* to eight qualified groups. These are *al-fuqara'* (beggar), *al-fuqara'* (who has no property or income; or has property or income but does not reach 50% of the *kifayah* or a sufficient limit of himself and his dependants), *al-masakin* (who has property or income which can only sustain more than 50% of his needs and his dependants needs but does not reach the *kifayah* limit), *amil*

(person or institution appointed by the Government to carry out the obligations of collection and distribution of *zakat*), *mualaf* (converts), *al-riqab* (slave or a person who is restrained by a force which restricts his freedom), *al-gharimin* (who is in debt, including the guarantor, to fulfil his own fundamental needs, his family, his dependants or society and requires immediate settlement as approved by Islamic law), *fi sabilillah* (the struggle, efforts and activities for the purpose of upholding and propagating the religion of Islam), and *ibn sabil* (traveller who has exhausted his food supply during a journey or during the commencement of his journey from his country which brings a good return to Islam and mankind or a Muslim person who has no supply during a journey).

In sura *al-Tawbah* verse 60, the gift of *zakat* is one of the efforts to tame the hearts of the converts by giving them the accessibility and preventing hardness in the earlier part of their introduction to Islam. For such purpose, there are many interpretations that can be found which review the meaning of converts in that verse. The phrase *Wa Muallafah Qulubuhum*, in this verse, defines as a group that leans to Islam by doing good deeds to the Muslims. This group is divided into two; the first group is the one that converts to Islam and the second; is the one that does not convert to Islam (al-Baqi, 1970).

Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) an Egyptian Islamic theorist in his book, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* categorised the *Wa Muallafah Qulubuhum* group to three. The first group includes individuals

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who just convert to Islam. By giving the zakat, it is hope that it will strengthen their Islamic faith. The second group includes individuals that have not yet converted. By giving the zakat, hopefully those individuals will be interested in converting to Islam. The third group includes those who have converted to Islam and remained steadfast (Qutb, 1998). By giving the zakat, hopefully they will be able to attract people among their race to convert to Islam after seeing their friends receiving so much sustenance. Giving the zakat represents the perfection of Allah's intelligence in managing the matters of its creations in every situational and surrounding aspect (Muhammad Mutawalla, 1991).

However, Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926) a chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars divides converts to two groups, Muslims and infidels. Muslims are those who have converted to Islam but still have weak faith, so the gift of zakat is to strengthen their belief. Those who have converted to Islam and remained steadfast and honourable among their race need not be given zakat. Infidel converts are those who have helped the Muslims to stop the destruction by the infidels and be given the zakat (al-Qaradawi, 1993).

Hence, convert is one of the eight groups deserving of zakat. This statement is supported by Wahbah al-Zuhayli (1932-2015) a Syrian Islamic scholar who specializing in Islamic law and legal philosophy in his *Tafsir al-Munir* that the word convert refers to the group of people that has converted to Islam but their profession of Islam is still weak and their heart needs to be strengthened. This interpretation also refers to the group of people that has nobility whereby the gift of zakat of this group will cause them to protect and defend Islam (al-Zuhayli, 1998). Meanwhile, Imam Abu Abdullah Al-Qurtubi (1214-1273) a famous exegete, from Cordoba in his *al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Quran* explained that the convert phrase refers to those who have converted to Islam, and by giving zakat, it is hoped that it will able to overture the hearts of those who still lack confidence in Islam. This also includes the wealthy people that have just become a Muslim (al-Qurtubi, 1996).

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1149-1209) a Persian theologian and philosopher explained that the converts is the fourth group in the order of deserving group to be receiving the zakat. Zakat giving is aimed at uniting and softening their hearts towards Islam, especially those at the initial stage of Islamic conversion (al-Razi, 1997). Meanwhile, Muhammad al-Shawkani (1759-1839) a Yemeni jurist scholar, explained converts to be the group that just professed the Islamic faith. They can be from the group of infidels that have been called upon by Prophet Muhammad to convert to Islam. They did not convert to Islam because of the threat of sword or by force. There are Islamic scholars who hold the opinion that these people only convert to Islam externally. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad has given the zakat as a way to overture their heart to Islam (al-Shawkani, 1973).

Thus, paying zakat is one of the manifestations of courtesy concept towards the converts aiming to overture their heart (Muhammad Mutawalla, 1991). Prophet Muhammad has given zakat to several Quraish that has the nobility to overture their hearts and their kith as can be found in one of his hadiths which narrated by Muslim (1994) as follows:

From Anas bin Malik, he said: On the day of Hunain war, the Ansar group has said that Allah has given His prophet the Hawazain confiscated property. The Prophet proceeded to give several Quraish men 100 camels. They said: May Allah SWT forgive the Prophet, he has only given the Quraish people and let us live even while our swords still contain blood of some of their people". Anas bin Malik said: Then the story was told to the Prophet. He then deliver a delegation to the Ansar group and gathered them in a dome made of skin, after they had gathered, the Prophet arrived and asked: What was the story told to me that you people had talked about?" The Ansar people said: Ones among us with high positions did not say anything while some of the young people among us had said: May Allah SWT forgives the Prophet, he has only given the Quraish people and let us live even while our swords still contain blood of some of their people". Then the Prophet said: I only give to several people so i can overture their hearts, wouldn't you people be at peace if others go with property, while you lot returns to your homes with the Prophet? By God, whatever you return with is better than what they have returned with". Then they answered: "Its true, Prophet. We are at peace". Then the Prophet again said: "You lot will discover a massive loot, be patient until you people sees Allah and His Prophet, because i will then be waiting at the hawd (Prophet's well)". They replied "We will stay patient".

In addition, giving the zakat will hopefully create an attractive implication to the Quraish people to be closer to Islam because their status and position have a big influence in the community at the time.

Distribution of zakat is an important instrument in the programs with the purpose of uplifting Islam, such as to solidify the religious values, refine the souls of individuals, and strengthening the Islamic faith. Therefore, the zakat is one of the mediums available to the converts in ensuring that their faith is always upheld and becomes stronger (Ramli, 2013). Giving the zakat to the converts has specific purposes, namely to motivate and strengthen the faith and practise of Islam. It is one of the aspects that need to be emphasized where if an individual has a problem such as difficulty or poverty in their lives, then by giving the zakat it will restore the faith in Islam because of the concern given by the other Muslims.

Hence, it can be concluded that zakat has a close relationship with the converts, specifically to help the group to keep practising Islam. In addition, the issue is, how the distribution of zakat becomes an instrument to solidify and strengthen the Islamic faith?. This paper aims to analyse on how zakat can perform the role of being one of the mediums available to the converts in ensuring their faith is always undented. Even though it is not in a large amount, by giving the zakat to this group, it would, to some extent, assist them financially. It will also make them feel appreciated and give due respect as a new member in Islam.

Problem of the Study

In the context of the state of Selangor, Malaysia, using the title of convert for someone who has converted to Islam will be in effect for five years starting from the date and year that one

registered his or her Islamisation in the Selangor Islamic Religion Council (MAIS). Based on the Selangor religious edict dated 25 October 2007, the time period of referring to a person as a convert last for 5 years based on the conditions that they attend religious classes organised or certified by MAIS; secondly, MAIS is responsible in paying all the costs involved in converts' learning.

The Selangor State Gazette decided that in the five-year period, converts can already manage themselves if they are committed in attending each class that is organised in each district, course and development program organised by MAIS (Abdul Majid, 2012).

Selangor's religious adviser has reviewed that the criteria needed as being practiced in the distribution the *zakat*'s rights to the converts in Selangor are:

In distributing the zakat's rights to the converts, the Selangor Zakat Board has underline few criteria that involves a convert, namely the criteria and condition that can make a person a convert, the methods in distributing the Zakat, the assistance scheme that is prepared and the categories of converts (Selangor Religious Adviser, 2015).

Based on the Proposed Paperwork for the Study of Edict Rearrangement for the Zakat Distribution Management System in the State of Selangor, Series 2 outlines 6 criteria of converts, among others:

1. Certified to have converted to Islam by the Selangor Islamic Religion Council⁶ or other certified institutions.
2. Convert, existing dependency and children born after converting to Islam that still require the guidance and protection within the five (5) year period.
3. Chief or non-Muslims that are influential and are intimate with Islam, hopefully by giving *zakat* will attract him and influence his community to Islam.
4. Family members of the convert that have the potential to convert to Islam.
5. The people with evil deeds towards Islam that must be made peaceful.
6. Non-Muslims that stay at the borders and pose the threat of betraying the Muslim rulers.

Meanwhile, the conditions of a convert are; requires Islamic guidance and education, requires a boost in their economy, and has the potential to attract their family and community to Islam.

LITERATURE OF THE STUDY

The studies done involving the converts have been done intensively. Fuadah Johari, *et. al.* (2013b.) identified the programmes or activities that are involves in the distribution of *zakat* mainly in group of *muallaf* (newly convert). The research has revealed that a huge amount had been allocated for the development of *muallaf* in the State of Selangor. On top of that, 31 different types of programmes have been assigned to ensure the *muallaf* can sustain and further become *mukallaf* after five years.

The role of *zakat* is to protect the benefits of the Muslims in the world, to cleanse their soul and the property by helping the underprivileged who are entitled to a fair share of those possessions. The relationship between *zakat* and converts is

among an element of attraction to the non-Muslims and a solution in preventing Muslims from apostasy as they struggle with financial difficulties in life. This suits the study by Mohd Salleh *et al.* (2013), who stated that the reason Muslims leave their faith is due to poverty. Single mothers, among others, do not have enough money to support the family. There are also cases of non-Muslim families who forced their kids to return to the original faith by threatening to stop all the financial aids.

There are several studies done about the converts. Among others is a study by Abdul Wahab Zani (2008) which discusses the understanding of the Islamic faith among converts in the Basic Islamic Guidance Centre (PUSBA). His study is to investigate the understanding of Islamic faith from the perspective of the Islamic's belief pillar among converts in the Centre of Guidance and Training Converts (PUSBA). It can be seen that the converts in the centre do not fully appreciate the Islamic faith. If this happens, they will return to their earlier faith. It also reveals that there are several people among the converts who do not fully appreciate Islam including the pillar of belief. With the inception of PUSBA, the understanding among converts almost successfully reaches half of its target. Therefore, the staffs in PUSBA also need to increase their work performance and quality so they can successfully carry out their duties especially in solidly monitoring the converts' faith. In the process of religious upbringing, especially ones that touch on the *samiyyat* (supernatural) matters, it requires a solid belief that will result in a stronger faith.

Other than that, Abd. Majid (2012) discusses factors that influenced converts to convert to Islam, how converts' matters are managed in Selangor as well as their feelings after the conversion. The study reveals that there are many internal and external influences that influence a convert to convert to Islam. Based on the data obtained by the Selangor's Converts Related Matters Department, Department of Human Development (BPI), Selangor Islamic Religion Council (MAIS) discovered that the majority of the respondents are satisfied with the current religion professed, which is Islam. They are also very satisfied with the brotherhood and Islamisation management handled by BPI.

Meanwhile, the study involving the converts was also stated in the study of the Integration of Chinese Converts with the Culture of the Malay Community in Selangor by Shaharuddin (2015). His study is to decide the level of understanding, acceptance and integration of the Chinese converts with regard to the culture of the Malay community in addition to observe the differences in the understanding, acceptance and integration with the culture of the Malay community based on age, gender, marital status, academic qualification, occupation and monthly salary. From the aspect of acceptance of the Chinese converts towards the culture of the Malay community, there are significant differences based on the age, marital status, occupation and month salary. Meanwhile, in terms of the integration aspect, there is a significant difference based on age and occupation. Such inferential analysis shows that there is a significant relationship and contribution between the understanding and acceptance of Chinese converts with the integration of the culture of the Malay community.

It is seen clearly that each study is different in the aspect of scope and objectives. And in this paper was designed to

identify the impact of *zakat* distribution towards strengthening the faith of converts in Selangor, Malaysia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative research that uses the approach of observation or also called survey that is planned by using the questionnaire method. Sekaran (2003) stated that the method to get data through questionnaire is an efficient method in the mechanism of data collection. This is because researchers know the information needed and how to measure an identifiable variable. The questionnaire method is used to get the background of a convert as in the gender, education background, occupation, monthly salary, and form of assistance received from the *zakat*. Other than that, the questionnaire method is also used to identify the impact of *zakat* distribution in solidifying the faith of converts in Selangor.

population that has similar features that can be studied (Creswell, 2008). The population of this study involves converts who obtain the guidance and protection of MAIS, which total 11,925 persons (MAIS, 2015).

This study involves respondents amounting to 454 converts in Selangor. The researchers group had chosen the state of Selangor as the location of study because the amount of registered converts in Selangor is greater compared to other states. Selangor is divided into nine districts, which are Petaling Jaya, Hulu Langat, Klang, Gombak, Kuala Langat, Sepang, Kuala Selangor, Sabak Bernam, and Hulu Selangor. Moreover, this study uses the five-point Likert scale because it makes it easier for the respondents to make the choices in the item prepared.

Table 1 Level of faith solidification among converts in Selangor

No	Items	Mean	sd	Interpretation
1	Islamic faith is an important subject to be learned by every Muslim.	4.71	0.55	High
2	Course / Class / Program / Training organised by Mais for Convert is Easy to Understand.	4.46	0.65	High
3	My knowledge on the Islamic faith increased after I attended the Course / Class / Program / Training organised by MAIS.	4.58	0.62	High
4	I am very interested in the content of the Course / Class / Program / Training Taught to me.	4.53	0.60	High
5	Course / Class / Program / Training organised by MAIS is not boring.	4.44	0.69	High
6	I am passionate about deepening my Islamic knowledge through the Course / Class / Program / Training organised by MAIS.	4.62	0.54	High
7	I can see the beauty of Islam through the Course / Class / Program / Training organised by MAIS.	4.59	0.54	High
8	Course / Class / Program / Training organised by MAIS adds my confidence in Islam.	4.62	0.53	High
9	Course / Class / Program / Training organised by MAIS proves to me that Islam is not a religion to be doubted.	4.63	0.60	High
10	I learn Islam from the local community	4.00	1.06	Moderately High
11	The faith practised by the community largely influences the practise of my faith.	3.99	1.01	Moderately High
12	Community becomes the propelling factor for me to hold strong to the faith.	4.04	1.04	High
13	The faith practised by teachers largely influences the practise of my faith.	4.41	0.69	High
14	Teachers becomes the propelling factor for me to hold on strongly to my faith.	4.47	0.66	High
15	I learn Islam from my friends.	3.95	0.97	Moderately high
16	The practise of my friends' faith largely influences the practise of my faith.	3.91	1.00	Moderately High
17	Friendship is the propelling factor for me to hold on strongly to the faith.	3.93	1.02	Moderately High
Overall		4.35	0.49	High

Source: 2015 Questionnaire

The use of the questionnaire instrument in the first phase is an effective way of obtaining information from respondents. Questionnaire is the most used method in the study of social science. This method is used along with other methods to strengthen the research information. In a questionnaire, it is very important to pay attention to the aspect of forming an item in order to get accurate data for a study (Zikmund, 1997). The second phase is through the qualitative approach that involves the process of collecting data by the researchers, which is based on an interview with three academicians. The researchers conducted the interview with the purpose of supporting and strengthening the findings obtained from a quantitative analysis. According to Neuman (2006) the data findings from the qualitative method are used as a foundation to support the study findings gathered. Hence, this study as a whole is quantitative and the data is going to be measured in a descriptive statistics such as the frequency and percentage of a particular data group. Therefore, the researchers opined that this method is suitable with the objective of the study in getting more complete and accurate information.

Population is a big group of individuals that has similar features while target population is a group of individuals in a

The Likert scale has been used in parts B, C and D. This scale uses 1 = very disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = quite disagree, 4 = agree 5 = very agree. Likert scale is used because it is a popular method used to compile information in a short period and is very easy to be managed, used and analysed effectively (Abdul Ghafar, 2003).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of the study towards the *zakat* distribution for converts in Selangor as shown in table 1.

Table 1 shows each item in the aspect of solidifying faith among converts in Selangor is at a high level. Among the high factors are Islamic faith is an important subject to be learned by every Muslim (mean = 4.71), Course/Class/Program/Training organised by MAIS proved to me that Islam is not a religion to be doubted (mean = 4.63), I am passionate about deepening my Islamic knowledge through the Course/Class/Program/Training organised by MAIS (mean = 4.62), Course/Class/Program/Training organised by MAIS adds my confidence in Islam (mean = 4.62), and I can see the beauty of Islam through the Course/Class/Program/Training organised by MAIS (mean = 4.59).

Meanwhile, among the low factors are; the practise of my friends' faith largely influences the practise of my faith (mean = 3.91), Friendship is the propelling factor for me to hold on strong to the faith (mean = 3.93), I learn Islam from my friends (mean = 3.95), The faith practised by the community largely influences the practise of my faith (mean = 3.99), and I learn Islam from the local community (mean = 4.00). And overall it shows that the factor of solidifying of faith among converts in Selangor is at a high level (mean = 4.35).

Among the highest impact of *zakat* distribution is to increase the understanding of the religion (mean = 4.41), enrich the spirit to continue living (mean = 4.37), close to Allah (mean = 4.36), feeling Allah's might (mean = 4.36) and getting a complete education (mean = 4.35). Meanwhile, among the lowest impact of *zakat* distribution is to resolve debts (mean = 3.78), to avoid arguments among family involving financial matters (mean = 4.00), avoid fights in family (mean = 4.01), to get a home (mean = 4.06) and to protect oneself.

The descriptive analysis involving mean and standard deviation is used to identify the difference in the factor of solidifying faith among converts in Selangor based on the education level. The outcome of this descriptive analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 The factor of solidifying the faith among converts in Selangor based on the education level

Education level	N	Mean	sd
No Education	59	4.27	0.50
UPSR	74	4.36	0.53
PMR/SPM	224	4.35	0.48
Diploma/STPM	65	4.36	0.50
Bachelor's Degree	28	4.37	0.38
Master/Ph.D	4	4.44	0.65

Source: 2015 Questionnaire

Table 2 shows that in the aspect of mean, converts with the education level of a Master/Ph.D (mean = 4.44) have a higher factor of solidifying faith compared to converts with the education level of a Bachelor's Degree (mean = 4.37), education level of Diploma/STPM (mean = 4.36), UPSR (mean = 4.36), PMR/SPM (mean = 4.35) and no education level (mean = 4.27).

Based on the findings, *zakat* distribution gives a high implication on the solidifying of faith among converts especially through the distribution of allocated program and classes. This is admitted by the converts as the classes that were attended serve to be the highest factor for the convert to solidify their faith. Data which dwells into the difference of factor in solidifying faith among converts in Selangor based on the education level also proves that the educational aspect is among the main factors that act as a medium in solidifying the faith of the converts.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study made by Jami'an (2005) related to appreciating Islam among the new Indian converts in Kuala Lumpur revealed factors such as the education, economic conditions, and the lack of participation in the religious classes organised by Department of Federal Territory Islamic Affairs (JAWI), Muslim Welfare Organisation Malaysia (PERKIM), and Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) to give implication in their appreciation of the Islamic teachings in

Malaysia. Rahisam Ramli (2013) has made an early observation to identify the mechanism of *zakat* distribution for the converts based on the current reality.

There is a need to guarantee that the converts do not get trapped in the apostasy phenomenon that becomes the main threat. In fact, there is no specific phenomenon to identify the needs of the converts in increasing the religious values in detailed compared to the beggars and the poor. The dependancy of the converts in purely receiving the financial assistance is inadequate to increase the religious values in themselves. The incorporation of the religious values is an important matter for the converts to solidify the faith, to practice and practise the religion as a Muslim, therefore a mechanism to distribute *zakat* specifically to increase the religious values in themselves needs to be created. The summary of this study airs the argument that the *zakat* institution needs a comprehensive *zakat* distribution mechanism for the converts as the best repository to prove on the perfection of the *zakat* distribution based on Islamic law (Khairuldin & Mohammad, 2013).

The findings of the study show that *zakat* can prevent oneself from going into the state of begging with a mean value of 4.20 which is at a high level. The study by Mohd Salleh *et al.* (2013) explained that one of the causes for the apostasy phenomenon is caused by the poverty endured by the converts. Based on the statistics revealed by MAIS, it reported that the total amount of monthly recipients in Selangor in 2013 is estimated at 8,342 persons with a total amount of RM4,060,300.00 while the total amount of recipients for the rental assistance is estimated at 408 persons amounting to RM904,760.00 (Mohd Nuri, 2013). This showed that *zakat* plays a role in helping the people with financial difficulties and simultaneously who can rescue the faith of Muslims from apostasy. Hence, MAIS needs to continuously improve comprehensive programmes that focus on sustaining the converts' belief and their thoughts (Johari, *et. al.*, 2013a.). The methods in distributing the *zakat* rights to converts can be divided to 12 items, which are:

- i. Help to fulfil the basic needs of the converts, dependency and new family, especially those who have been neglected by their own family.
- ii. Help in preparing the convert towards being independent.
- iii. Help in cases that require legal services.
- iv. Obtains the service of educators, counsellors and professionals in fulfilling the objectives above.
- v. Distributing to groups and NGOs after identifying brilliant converts.
- vi. Distributing to groups and NGOs that have a concentrated program for the converts.
- vii. Distributing to groups, NGOs and programs to bring the non-Muslim community closer to Islam.
- viii. Preparing enabling programs for the converts covering children, teenagers and youth among the family of the converts encompassing economical, welfare, social and religious programs.
- ix. Creating scalable programs to solidify the brotherhood among converts within the local community.
- x. Creating several facilities and education needs covering infrastructures, human resource, reference,

readings, equipment and clothing materials suitable for converts.

- xi. Creating a specific programme that involves influential Non-Muslims to be intimate with Islam.
- xii. Utilizing programs of visiting to destinations that can solidify the faith, practice and brotherhood in Islam.

CONCLUSION

Zakat distribution to converts is to help them get closer to Islam. Various programs can be conducted and organised especially ones geared towards the converts, through the allocation of zakat for the converts. It can be managed by the governmental bodies, statutory bodies, or individuals. Zakat giving can help the efforts in solidifying the faith of converts in Islam.

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