

RELATING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES TO FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

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Abstract

Five pillars of Islam are ingrained in the minds and actions of the Muslims. Since students at higher learning institutions major into varying disciplines, their ability to relate their respective courses with the five pillars of Islam will likely vary. However, it is very important for Muslim undergraduates outside the religious studies programs to integrate the two because Muslims are Muslims first; they practice their faith in all situations. The main objective of the study is to identify the general relationship between students' academic disciplines and their affinity with the five pillars of Islam. A special purpose instrument was created to elicit student perceptions towards their preference using a combination of Likert-like, open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The instrument was distributed through a mailing list to the target students. The completed instruments were content-analyzed to identify the general patterns of relationships between the respective academic disciplines and the five pillars of Islam. Findings of the research are deemed significant in suggesting whether or not the undergraduate students can apply their knowledge of the five pillars of Islam to the courses and vice versa. Closeness of association between these two domains will make the students integrated in their religious lives.

Keywords: Academic, Business, Islam, Muslim Students.

INTRODUCTION

Five pillars of Islam are ingrained in the minds and actions of the Muslims. The pillars are intimate to the Muslims (Braswell, 2000; Schumm & Kohler, 2006; Mawdudi, 2013). Braswell (2000) argued that Islam is the religion to its followers, called Muslims. The two terms – minds and actions - are cohesive, the former is the concept and the latter is the practice. Nevertheless, the two terms might not be seen as mutually reinforcing in practice. Indeed, the social cohesion

of Islam and the understanding of Islam has been influenced by social life style (Schumm & Kohler, 2006). According to Mawdudi (2013), Muslims could have different understanding of Islam due to education, culture, and lifestyle preferences. In fact, Noor et al. (2020) observed the actual practice of Islam has been ritual routines instead of way of life as prescribed by Islam.

Some of the Muslims have lack of understanding about Islam in both five pillars of Islam as well as the six pillars of faith (*Iman*). The lack of understanding about Islam is primarily due to deficiency in recognizing Islam as way of life (Muhamad, 2009; Habib, Batool & Hassan, 2020). According to Aziz & Shamsul (2004), Islam has been understood as personal cultural practice instead of public practice of life. The contexts have strong influence to lead to this religious understanding of Islam. In fact, Islamic education has been taught in schools along with other subjects but without strong emphasis it as way of life (Hashim & Langgulung, 2008). This situation has influenced the state of religiosity practice and ethical judgment (Muhamad, 2009; Muhamad & Mizerski, 2013). Thus, this study aims to identify the general relationship between students' academic disciplines and their affinity with the five pillars of Islam.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Five pillars of Islam should be assimilated with the minds and actions of the Muslims. Muslims have been exposed to five pillars of Islam, namely declaration of faith, performing prayers (*salat*), fasting (*saum*), alms giving (*zakat*) and performing pilgrimage (*hajj*) since their childhood (Syed & Ritchie, 2006; Kamal-ud-Din, 2010, Hussain, 2012; Ningsih, 2014). However, there may exist a mismatch between the true understanding of the five pillars and the practice (Syed & Ritchie, 2006; Ningsih, 2014). According to Kamal-ud-Din (2010), Islamic education is being taught by emphasizing cognitive or memorization instead of practical. Ningsih (2014) had the same concerns who said the teaching of Islam lacks of pragmatism. Since Islam is way of life, which transcends routines and rituals, there should be more role models and examples.

Since students at higher learning institutions major into varying disciplines, their ability to relate their respective courses with the five pillars of Islam will likely vary. Muslim students in Malaysia should be able to practice Islam vividly. However, the reality does not fully reflect the situation. Prevailing practices suggest that Islam has been understood as personal cultural practice instead of public practice of life (Aziz & Shamsul, 2004). The contexts have strong influence to lead to this religious understanding of Islam. A dominant contributing factor seems to be Islamic education has been taught in schools along with other subjects without emphasizing the religion as way of life (Hashim & Langgulung, 2008), which in turn moulds religious practice and ethical judgment (Muhamad, 2009; Muhamad & Mizerski, 2013).

In the light of this situation, it is very important for Muslim undergraduates outside the religious studies programs particularly to integrate the two because Muslims are Muslims first, they practice their faith in all situations. The Muslims have been imbued with the Five Pillars of Islam (Braswell, 2000; Schumm & Kohler, 2006; Mawdudi, 2013). Islam is the religion of the Muslims (Braswell, 2000). The two terms mutually reflect each other in principle, but they do

not match in practice. This explains the influence of social life style on the Muslims (Schumm & Kohler, 2006). According to Mawdudi (2013), the level of understanding of the Muslims is influenced by education, culture, and lifestyle preferences. The Muslims tend to practice Islam as ritual routines instead of way of life (Noor et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The researchers created a special purpose instrument to elicit student perceptions towards their preference using a combination of Likert-like, open-ended and multiple-choice questions. This research method allows for rich information and also triangulation (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Cosgrove, 2020). The instrument has been distributed through Google Classroom to the target students. The completed instruments that were returned by the students were content-analyzed to identify the general patterns of relationships between the respective academic disciplines and the five pillars of Islam.

The instrument has several parts. Firstly, the respondents were asked to provide their demographic background. Secondly, the respondents were asked to write their opinion based on the topics of declaration of faith (*Tawhid*, *shahada*), prayer (*salat*), alms (*zakat*), fasting (*sawm*), and pilgrimage (*hajj*). Thirdly, the respondents were asked to state one of their most preferred topics. Fourthly, the respondents were asked to explain reason for choosing the most preferred topic in the second question. The respondents were requested to provide one reason in their explanation. Fifthly, the respondents were requested to express their choice if they were asked to relate the topic in second question with one of the non-religious studies' courses or applied Islamic related courses (e.g., Accounting for *Zakat*, Foundation of Islamic Economics, Management from an Islamic Perspective) that they have studied or they are currently studying. Lastly, the respondents were asked to explain a reason for choosing the course in the fourth question. They were asked to provide one (1) reason in the explanation in approximately 70 words (not strictly). All the data were analyzed using Chi-square and t-test analyses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section narrates the findings according to the sequence of the questions in the instrument. The nominal relationships in Chi-square were not statistically significant due to non-fulfilment of the Ch-square assumptions. T-Test analysis does not produce statistically significant results. Despite this the results show some beneficial findings.

A total of 49 students participated in the study. Majority of the students were registered with Business Communication (40.8%) and Strategic Management (30.6%) courses. The remaining students attended Organizational Change and Development (18.4%), and Industrial Relations (10.2%). Table 1 summarizes the participation of students from four different courses.

Table 1: Participation of Respondents from Four Different Courses

Courses	Frequency	Percent
Business Communication	20	40.8
Industrial Relations	5	10.2

Organizational Change and Development	9	18.4
Strategic Management	15	30.6
Total	49	100.0

In terms of academic programs, a high percentage of the respondents are students from Bachelor of Business Administration (63.3%). The second highest consists of Bachelor of Accounting (20.4%), whereas Bachelor of Islamic Finance (10.2%) and other programs (6.1%). Table 2 shows the respondents' specialisation of academic programs.

Table 2: Respondents' Specialisation of Academic Programs

Academic Programs	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor of Accounting	10	20.4
Bachelor of Business Administration	31	63.3
Bachelor of Islamic Finance	5	10.2
Other	3	6.1
Total	49	100.0

For level of studies, 40.8% of the respondents belonged to Level 4, 38.8% from Level 2, and 18.4% from Level 3. There is one respondent who did not indicate any Level of Studies. Table 3 shows respondents' Level of Studies.

Table 3: Respondents' Level of Studies

Level of Studies	Frequency	Percent
2	19	38.8
3	9	18.4
4	20	40.8
Missing	1	2.0

In terms of gender, 73.5% of the respondents are female and 26.5% are male students. The pattern and nature of the feedback provided by the respondents are influenced by courses that they students are studying, academic programs, level of studies, and gender. The results should be associated with the respondents' profile. According to Glaser (2012), the main purpose of reporting the respondents' profile is to allow for the understanding of context of the feedback. Likewise, the profile of respondents allows readers to triangulate the results (Creswell, 1999; Cardão-Pito, 2016). In response to the first question where the respondents were required to write/type a **research paper** about Declaration of faith (*Tawhid, shahada*), Prayer (*salat*), Alms (*zakat*), Fasting (*sawm*), and Pilgrimage (*hajj*), female respondents rated "almost preferred" (mean 3.72-4.50 on the scale of 5) to the five topics compared the male students. Table 4 shows the T-Test on preferred research topic by respondents.

Table 4: T-Test on preferred research topic by respondents

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q1 Declaration of faith (<i>Shahadah</i>)	Male	13	4.08	1.188	.329
	Female	36	3.78	1.124	.187
Q2 Prayers (<i>Salat</i>)	Male	13	4.31	1.182	.328
	Female	36	4.50	.910	.152
Q3 Alms (<i>Zakat</i>)	Male	13	3.38	1.502	.417
	Female	36	4.19	1.064	.177
Q4 Fasting (<i>Saum</i>)	Male	13	3.85	1.214	.337
	Female	36	4.17	.910	.152
Q5 Pilgrimage (<i>Hajj</i>)	Male	13	3.00	.816	.226
	Female	36	3.72	1.059	.176

In terms of ranking, the highest preferred topic is Prayer (*salat*) (ranked 1), followed by Fasting (*sawm*) (ranked 2), Alms (*zakat*) (ranked 3), Declaration of faith (*Tawhid, shahada*) (ranked 4) and Pilgrimage (*hajj*) (ranked 5). Table 5 shows the ranking of topics.

Table 5: Ranking of topics

	Q1 Declaration of faith (<i>Shahadah</i>)	Q2 Prayers (<i>Salat</i>)	Q3 Alms (<i>Zakat</i>)	Q4 Fasting (<i>Saum</i>)	Q5 Pilgrimage (<i>Hajj</i>)
N	Valid 49	49	49	49	49
Mean	3.86	4.45	3.98	4.08	3.53
Rank	4	1	3	2	5
Std. Deviation	1.137	.980	1.233	.997	1.043

For the courses the respondents wanted to relate their topic with the highest are management (51.1%), followed by others (17.8%) and economics (13.3%). Table 6 shows the cross-tabulation results for applied courses with Q1 Declaration of faith (*Tawhid, shahada*).

Table 6: Cross Tabulation of Applied Courses and Q1 Declaration of Faith (*Shahadah*)

		Q1 Declaration of faith (Shahadah)					Total
			Prefer least	2	3	4	Prefer most
Applied courses	Accounting	Count	0	1	0	0	0
		% of Total	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
	Decision science	Count	0	0	0	0	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
	Economics	Count	0	0	2	4	0
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	4.4%	8.9%	13.3%

Finance	Count	0	1	0	1	1	3
	% of Total	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	2.2%	2.2%	6.7%
Management	Count	2	1	7	5	8	23
	% of Total	4.4%	2.2%	15.6%	11.1%	17.8%	51.1%
Marketing	Count	0	0	0	0	3	3
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	6.7%
Other	Count	0	0	2	3	3	8
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	4.4%	6.7%	6.7%	17.8%
Total	Count	2	3	11	13	16	45
	% of Total	4.4%	6.7%	24.4%	28.9%	35.6%	100.0%

Cross-tabulation between applied courses and Q2 prayers (*salat*) shows the highest is management (51.1%), followed by others (17.8%) and economics (13.3%). Table 7 shows the cross-tabulation results for applied courses with Q2 prayers (*salat*).

Table 7: Cross Tabulation for Applied courses * Q2 Prayers (Salat)

			Q2 Prayers (Salat)				Total
			Prefer least	3	4	Prefer most	
Applied courses	Accounting	Count	0	0	0	1	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	2.2%
	Decision science	Count	0	0	0	1	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	2.2%
	Economics	Count	0	2	3	1	6
		% of Total	0.0%	4.4%	6.7%	2.2%	13.3%
	Finance	Count	0	0	0	3	3
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	6.7%
	Management	Count	2	2	4	15	23
		% of Total	4.4%	4.4%	8.9%	33.3%	51.1%
	Marketing	Count	0	0	0	3	3
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	6.7%
	Other	Count	0	1	2	5	8
		% of Total	0.0%	2.2%	4.4%	11.1%	17.8%
Total	Count		2	5	9	29	45
	% of Total		4.4%	11.1%	20.0%	64.4%	100.0%

For cross-tabulation results between applied courses and Q3 alms (*zakat*), management is the highest (51.1%), followed by others (17.8%) and economics (13.3%). Table 8 shows the cross-tabulation results for applied courses with Q3 alms (*zakat*).

Table 8: Cross Tabulation for Applied courses * Q3 Alms (*Zakat*)

			Q3 Alms (<i>Zakat</i>)				Total
			Prefer least	2	3	4	Prefer most
Applied courses	Accounting	Count	0	0	0	0	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
	Decision science	Count	0	0	0	0	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
	Economics	Count	0	0	1	0	5
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	11.1%
	Finance	Count	0	0	0	1	2
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	4.4%
	Management	Count	2	5	2	7	7
		% of Total	4.4%	11.1%	4.4%	15.6%	15.6%
	Marketing	Count	0	0	0	0	3
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%
Total	Other	Count	0	0	4	2	2
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	8.9%	4.4%	4.4%
		Count	2	5	7	10	21
		% of Total	4.4%	11.1%	15.6%	22.2%	46.7%

Cross-tabulation between applied courses and Q4 fasting (*saum*), management is the highest (51.1%), followed by others (17.8%) and economics (13.3%). Table 9 shows the cross-tabulation results of applied courses with Q4 fasting (*saum*).

Table 9: Applied courses * Q4 Fasting (*Saum*)

			Q4 Fasting (<i>Saum</i>)				Total
			Prefer least	3	4	Prefer most	
Applied courses	Accounting	Count	0	0	1	0	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	2.2%
	Decision science	Count	0	0	0	1	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	2.2%
	Economics	Count	0	3	2	1	6
		% of Total	0.0%	6.7%	4.4%	2.2%	13.3%
	Finance	Count	0	0	1	2	3

	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	4.4%	6.7%
Management	Count	1	6	6	10	23
	% of Total	2.2%	13.3%	13.3%	22.2%	51.1%
Marketing	Count	0	0	0	3	3
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	6.7%
Other	Count	0	4	2	2	8
	% of Total	0.0%	8.9%	4.4%	4.4%	17.8%
Total	Count	1	13	12	19	45
	% of Total	2.2%	28.9%	26.7%	42.2%	100.0%

Results of cross-tabulation between applied courses and Q5 pilgrimage (*hajj*) shows management the highest (51.1%), followed by others (17.8%) and economics (13.3%). Table 10 shows the applied courses with Q5 pilgrimage (*hajj*).

Table 10: Applied courses * Q5 Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)

			Q5 Pilgrimage (Hajj)					Total
			Prefer least	2	3	4	Prefer most	
Applied courses	Accounting	Count	0	0	1	0	0	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
	Decision science	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	2.2%
	Economics	Count	0	0	5	1	0	6
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	2.2%	0.0%	13.3%
	Finance	Count	0	0	2	1	0	3
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	4.4%	2.2%	0.0%	6.7%
	Management	Count	2	2	10	7	2	23
		% of Total	4.4%	4.4%	22.2%	15.6%	4.4%	51.1%
	Marketing	Count	0	0	0	0	3	3
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	6.7%
	Other	Count	0	0	3	2	3	8
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	4.4%	6.7%	17.8%
	Total	Count	2	2	21	11	9	45
		% of Total	4.4%	4.4%	46.7%	24.4%	20.0%	100.0%

The previous pages show that all the five pillars of Islam have highest impact on the applied courses of management (51.1%, the highest), followed by others (17.8%) and economics (13.3%).

In terms of relevance or the application of courses to five pillars of Islam, more than three quarter of the respondents rated 4 (42.9%) and 5 (30.6%). In fact, if ratings 3 to 5 were pooled, 95.8 % of the respondents said they would be able to relate the course that they were studying with the five pillars of Islam. This shows that the courses that the respondents have completed or currently studying can be applied to the five pillars of Islam. Table 11 shows the frequency of application of courses to pillars of Islam.

Table 11: Application of Courses to the Five Pillars

	Frequency	Percent
A little	2	4.2
3	10	20.8
4	21	43.8
A lot	15	31.2
Total	48	98.0
Total	49	100.0

A plausible reason for the students to be able to relate five pillars of Islam with management and economic courses in particular is due to traits, behavioural and contingency nature of the courses (Gazi, 2020; Colabi & KhodadadHosseini, 2020; Farooq & Hadi, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The students showed their preferred topics to be applied to the five Pillars of Islam in order of priority as follows: Prayer (*salat*), Fasting (*sawm*), Alms (*zakat*), Declaration of faith (*Tawhid*, *shahada*) and Pilgrimage (*hajj*). The respondents rated Management (51.0 percent) as the course that they would relate with for each of the five pillars of Islam. Results show that courses that require interaction with fellow human beings such as management and economics were appealing to the students to relate with the five pillars of Islam. With the results of the preliminary study, the academic and religious related institutions can help enhance the application aspects among the students and the graduates in the respective institutions.

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