



AWARENESS AND RESPECT TOWARDS
OTHER RELIGIONS AMONG MALAYSIANS
IN KUALA LUMPUR: A SURVEY

BY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and
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ABSTRACT

After almost sixty years of independence in a multiracial, multicultural and multi-religious country, it seems Malaysians have yet to properly mature regarding the ways in which they interact with adherents of other religions. Today, we can witness the many religious issues occurring in Malaysia which illustrate the lack of understanding and tolerance of each other. It seems that religion is the cause of conflict. This research is about the diversity of religions in Malaysia which focuses on measurement and evaluation of the level of awareness of Malaysians and respect towards other religions. For the purpose of this study, the discussion revolves around Islām, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, and covers the Kuala Lumpur area. This research comprises library research and fieldwork and contains textual and contextual aspects. The textual aspect explores the Islām, Buddhist, Hindu and Christian perspectives on religious awareness and tolerance. Various secondary religious materials were used to gain insights into the teachings of various religions concerning tolerance towards others. The research does not discuss the theological aspects of any living religion in Malaysia in-depth; rather, it focuses on the *human-to-human relationship* in an environment of diverse religions. The contextual aspect of the research analyses the attitude of Kuala Lumpur respondents towards other religions. From a total population of 7.6 million in Kuala Lumpur, a random sample size of approximately 400 was deemed relevant for this study taken from both Muslim and non-Muslim respondents. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The result of the study found that Kuala Lumpur respondents have a high level of general knowledge about other religions (49.0%), a moderate level of observation towards adherents of other religions (69.3%), a high level of awareness towards other religions (63.2%), a high level of importance of understanding other religions (49.8%), and a moderate level of attitude towards understanding other religions (50.2%). These results show that the respondents in Kuala Lumpur are aware and do respect people of other beliefs. In fact, they have a good religious relationship with other people within their religions and outside. The majority of the respondents also agreed that lacking understanding of other religions causes religious intolerance. However, the results also found that, even though the attitude and understanding of the respondents towards other religions are considered high, they do not really interfere, touch upon, or discuss openly about religion in their social interaction.

خلاصة البحث

بعد ما يقارب ستين عاما من الاستقلال في بلد متعدد الأعراق والثقافات ومتعدد الأديان، يبدو كأن الماليزيين ما زالوا متخلفين في طريقة تفاعلهم مع أتباع الديانات الأخرى. لا يخفى على كثير من الناس ما نشهده اليوم من المشكلات العديدة التي تحدث بسبب اختلاف ديني في ماليزيا مما يعبر - بشكل وضوح - عن عدم فهم، وعدم تسامح بعضهم مع بعض آخر، وكأن اختلاف الدين هو سبب المشكلة. ويدور هذا البحث حول تنوع الأديان في ماليزيا، مركزا على قياس وتقويم مستوى وعي الماليزيين واحترام أهل دين لأهل دين آخر. وسعيًا لتحقيق أغراض هذه الدراسة دارت المناقشة حول الإسلام والهندوسية والبوذية والمسيحية فقط في مساحة ولاية كوالالمبور فحسب. ومنهجية هذا البحث تدور حول بحث مكتبي وميداني كما يحتوي على نصوص وجوانب سياقية للنصوص. واستكشفت الجوانب النصية من وجهة نظر الإسلام والهندوسية والبوذية والمسيحية في التسامح الديني والمعرفي. واستخدم البحث المواد الثانوية من مختلف الأديان للوصول إلى تعاليم مختلف الأديان بشأن التسامح تجاه الآخرين. والبحث لا يناقش الجانب اللاهوتي من أي دين حي في ماليزيا في العمق، بل يركز على علاقة الإنسان مع الإنسان في بيئة مختلفة الأديان. وركز الجانب السياقي على تحليل موقف مجيبي الاستبانة في كوالالمبور تجاه الأديان الأخرى. ويعد حجم العينة العشوائية من حوالي 400 مشارك أخذت من المشاركين المسلمين ومن غير المسلمين من مجموع سكان كوالالمبور الذين يبلغ عددهم 7.6 مليون مناسبًا لغرض هذه الدراسة. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الأداة الإحصائية، الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS). ووجدت نتائج الدراسة أن المشاركين في كوالالمبور لديهم مستوى عال من المعرفة العامة حول الديانات الأخرى بنسبة مئوية (49.0%)، ومستوى معتدل من اعتبار ممارسي الديانات الأخرى (69.3%)، ومستوى عال من المعرفة حول الديانات الأخرى بنسبة مئوية (63.2%)، ومستوى عال من أهمية فهم الديانات الأخرى بنسبة مئوية (49.8%)، ومستوى معتدل من موقف فهم الديانات الأخرى (50.2%). وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أن المشاركين في كوالالمبور على علم واحترام بممارسي الديانات الأخرى. وبدون شك، أنهم يحسنون معاملة أهل دينهم وأهل غير دينهم. ووافق معظم المشاركين بأن عدم القدرة على فهم الأديان الأخرى تسبب عدم التسامح بين أهل الأديان المختلفة. وعلى الرغم من أن مواقف المشاركين تجاه الأديان الأخرى وفهمهم لها كان عاليًا، إلا أنه لا توجد بينهم احتكاكات أو مداخلات بينهم، كذلك لا توجد مناقشات صريحة بينهم تدل على تفاعلهم الاجتماعي في واقع الحياة.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (*Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Comparative Religion).

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Fadzilah Din
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (*Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Comparative Religion).

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Rahmah Bt. Ahmad H. Osman
Dean, Kulliyah of Islamic
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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To these three persons who have the same root word in name,

whom I love so much;

My beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ ‘alayh wa sallam,

My honourable mother Hamidah Binti Abu Bakar, and

My respected father Mohamad Bin Munawar.

May Allah bless them and grant them Jannah Al-Firdaus Al-A’lā. Āmīn...

To all my siblings;

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Abdul Muhaimin, Abdul Mu’izz, Abdul Mu’min

Abdul Mushawwir & Nor Nazura,

Munirah & Ahmad Sharir,

Izzah Hafizah & Ikhwan Affan,

Raihan Mardhiah & Abdullah,

‘Iffah ‘Adilah & Ahmad Nabil.

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

’ = ء	f = ف	r = ر
b = ب	q = ق	z = ز
t = ت	k = ك	s = س
th = ث	l = ل	sh = ش
j = ج	m = م	ṣ = ص
ḥ = ح	n = ن	ḍ = ض
kh = خ	h = هـ	ṭ = ط
d = د	w = و	ẓ = ظ
dh = ذ	y = ي	‘ = ع
gh = غ		

Short vowels	Long vowels
a = اَ	ā = ا + اَ
i = اِ	ī = اِ + اِ
u = اُ	ū = اُ + اُ

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Malaysia is a multi-faith, multicultural, multiracial, and multi-ethnic country. Its major living religions are Islām, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Chinese. Because of the religious diversity in Malaysia, the researcher is interested to see the level of awareness and respect of Malaysians towards adherents of other religions. *Awareness* means knowledge or understanding of a subject, issue, or situation, and the ability to notice things¹ while *respect* means to show that you understand the importance of something by not doing anything against it².

Not too long ago, many Malaysians were shocked by an application to use the word *Allāh* as a translation of *God* by the Christians in their publications. On February 16, 2009, a judicial review filed by the Roman Catholic Church, led by Archbishop Murphy Pakiam, named the Home Ministry and the government as respondents to seek among others, a declaration for the ministry to prohibit the use of the word *Allāh* in the Herald publication because it is deemed illegal³. Such an application was not previously requested, and many Malaysian Muslims considered it as an attempt to create confusion and to challenge the sanctity of Islām.

In Shah Alam, on August 29, 2009, approximately 200 Muslim protesters comprising mostly of residents of Section 23 and outsiders, marched from the Shah

¹ Michael Rundell, *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners: International Student Edition*, (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002), 81.

² *Ibid.*, 1207.

³ *The Sun Daily*, “Verdict on Use of “Allāh” Word, Altantuya Murder Case on Monday,” 21 June, 2014, 1.

Alam mosque to the Selangor State Secretariat building carrying a severed head of a cow, protesting the relocation of a 150-year-old Hindu temple from Section 19 to Section 23⁴. Some of them spat, cursed, and swore while stepping on the head of a cow. A cow is considered sacred to Hindus and should be given respect. This was a shameful event because the procession was organised by a group of Muslims who are supposed to be more tolerant towards other religions.

As for the cases targeting Muslims and Islām, on July 11 and 12, 2013, Tan Jye Yee, 25, and Vivian Lee May Ling, 24, were jointly charged with publishing a seditious photograph on their Facebook page, ‘Alvin and Vivian – Alvivi’ at <https://www.facebook.com/alvivi.swingers>, with the caption, “Selamat Berbuka Puasa dengan Bak Kut Teh... wangi, enak, menyelerakan!!!” (Happy Breaking Fast with Bak Kut Teh... fragrant, delicious and appetizing!!!) and a halal logo which caused anger among Muslims for their lack of sensitivity towards Islām and Muslims.

Another case of insensitivity occurred on the holiday resort, Sedili Besar, Kota Tinggi, Johor Bahru on August 10, 2013, where a group of Buddhists from Singapore, used the resort’s *surau* for their religious ceremony with the permission of the resort owner. A guest of the resort was shocked when he realised the Buddhists were praying in the *surau* as he wanted to perform the Asar prayer⁵. Since the building is specifically named *surau*, it was not supposed to be used for activities other than Islāmic religious ceremonies. This case highlighted the ignorance of others to other religions. Although historically, Christians and Jews are allowed to pray in the masjid, as Muslims are also allowed to pray in a church or synagogue; this historical perspective is not applicable in the Malaysian context.

⁴ *The Sun Daily*, “Hisham Calls for Calm over ‘Cow Head’ Incident,” 31 August, 2009, 1.

⁵ *The Sun Daily*, “Police Receive Six Reports on Use of Surau by Buddhists,” 13 August, 2013, 1.

After 58 years of independence in a multicultural country, it seems as if Malaysians have yet to properly mature with regard to the ways in which they interact with the adherents of other religions. Irrespective of religion, Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia are supposed to be considerate and aware of religious sensitivities of those with whom they live. Knowledge, understanding, awareness, and good attitude towards others are important to provide and generate better citizens and to become an exemplary country with diverse religions.

The purpose of this research is to gauge the need of Malaysians to understand each other. This research proposes the basic need for both Malaysian Muslims and non-Muslims in dealing with adherents of other religions, especially as citizens in a multiracial country. This research evaluates the awareness of other religions among Malaysians in Kuala Lumpur. With the objective of promoting mutual respect for other religions, this research seeks to instill religious harmony and tolerance among Malaysians as a whole.

Since this study is about Malaysia wherein the major religions are Islām, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, the attitudes towards other religions will be analysed from texts relevant to each faith.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research aims to explore the awareness of Malaysians about the religious diversity in Malaysia. Today, there are many religious issues occurring in Malaysia which illustrate the lack of understanding and tolerance of the religion of each citizen. From the above examples, it seems that religion is the cause of conflict. However, this is contradictory to the teachings of Islām, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity.

Therefore, this study proposes to examine the underlying factors of intolerance and/or lack of awareness towards other religions.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What does Islām say about religious awareness and tolerance?
2. What do Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity say about religious awareness and tolerance?
3. What is the actual attitude of Kuala Lumpur respondents towards other religions?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research has the following objectives:

1. To describe the Islāmic perspective on religious awareness and tolerance
2. To explore the Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian perspectives on religious awareness and tolerance
3. To analyse the attitude of Kuala Lumpur respondents towards other religions

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There are many researches in comparative religion about the issues of understanding other religions, religious diversity, interfaith relations, interreligious dialogues, and religious tolerance and harmony. However, the aspect of assimilation and understanding such as awareness, application in daily life, and practicality of the knowledge gained from other religions are rarely measured. This research thus focuses on the level of the awareness of Malaysians of other religions.

This research measures the level of the knowledge and understanding of Malaysians about their religion and the religion of other citizens and residents living in Malaysia. It is also meant to gain insights about their relation and treatment of people who belong to other religions. The researcher assumes that awareness of the others will produce better citizens; for example, citizens who are tolerant, and understanding of others. This assumption is tested to determine whether awareness and knowledge of the religion of other citizens and residents will produce good citizens or whether it is irrelevant.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study measures the level of awareness of other religions of Malaysians. For the purpose of this study, the discussion revolves around Islām, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity only. The study is limited by its chosen sample population. The population selected for this study covers only those living in Kuala Lumpur. The areas that were selected for this study include Bukit Bintang, Titiwangsa, Setiawangsa, Wangsa Maju, Batu, Kepong, Segambut, Lembah Pantai, Seputeh, Bandar Tun Razak, and Cheras. Neighbouring states are not included in this research. Hence, the results cannot be generalised to areas outside Kuala Lumpur.

This study seeks to gain insights about whether awareness necessarily leads to tolerance. The research does not discuss the theological aspects of any living religion in Malaysia in depth; rather, it focuses on the human-to-human relationship in an environment with diverse religions.

1.7 METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

This research employs a qualitative methodology. However, a survey was used to procure information for analysis. Various secondary religious materials were used to gain insights about the teachings of various religions concerning tolerance towards others. In addition to this, a survey was conducted in selected areas in Kuala Lumpur about awareness and respect towards other religions. It required the random distribution of designed questionnaires to Kuala Lumpur respondents for the purpose of collecting relevant information that can ascertain the best answer to the research questions. The data were analysed by means of statistical analysis using the statistical tool Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The sample size for this research was calculated using Raosoft⁶. From a total population of 7.6 million in Kuala Lumpur, a sample size of approximately 400 was considered relevant for this study. The respondents for this research were categorised into several categories which have been divided into 200 Muslim respondents and 200 non-Muslim respondents. A random sample was taken from both Muslim and non-Muslim respondents.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

The materials reviewed in this section comprise researches on religious harmony, religious tolerance, religious freedom, controversial issues, and dialogues among different adherents in Malaysia. The aspects of review are educational, political, social, and legal. The literature reviewed is arranged chronologically and categorized into

⁶ Raosoft is sample size calculator which can be accessed online.

themes which are social aspect, educational aspect, and political aspect of religious awareness and tolerance.

Social Aspect of Religious Awareness and Tolerance

A Ph.D. thesis entitled *Non-Muslim Response towards Islām in Malaysia: A Case Study in Kuala Lumpur*⁷ excellently describes the understanding and awareness of non-Muslims about Islām and Muslims in Malaysia. It provides an analysis of some misconceptions and misunderstandings faced by non-Muslims towards Islām.

Islām and Tolerance explains the meaning of tolerance in the Malaysian context as an exemplary multi-faith country. The second chapter contains the discussion by the former Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. He discussed the importance of instilling tolerance among Malaysians through better understanding of Islām and other religions by citing examples from Prophet Muḥammad *ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayh wa sallam* in dealing with people of other religions. There is a dialogue session with Tun Mahathir regarding the multi-religiousness of Malaysia. The book seeks to promote social unity regardless of belief or faith⁸.

Articles regarding Islām in Malaysia were also reviewed. Three articles entitled *The Islāmic State or the State of Islām in Malaysia*⁹, *Islām in Malaysia: Between Rhetoric and Reality*¹⁰, and *The Issue of Islāmic State in Malaysia*¹¹, mention the

⁷ Osman Abdullah @ Chuah Hock Leng, “Non-Muslim Response towards Islām in Malaysia: A Case Study in Kuala Lumpur,” (Ph. D. dissertation, International Islāmic University Malaysia, 1991), 1-25.

⁸ Mahathir Mohamad, “Improving Tolerance through Better Understanding” in *Islām and Tolerance*, edited by Syed Othman Alhabshi & Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan (Malaysia: Institute of Islāmic Understanding Malaysia, 1996), 15-42.

⁹ Patricia A. Martinez, “The Islāmic State or the State of Islām in Malaysia,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 23, no. 3, (2001): 474-503.

¹⁰ Omar Farouk Bajunid, “Islām in Malaysia: Between Rhetoric and Reality,” *NIAS Nytt*, no. 4, (2004): 6-7, 19.

¹¹ Ibrahim Abu Bakar, “The Issue of Islāmic State in Malaysia,” *The Journal of Political Science*, vol. 27, (2009): 77-85.

superiority of Islām in the Federal Constitution. These articles provide views on challenges, problems, public perceptions, and recommendations in building and resolving good interreligious relations for a multi-ethnic country. The most important point in these articles are the analyses on the effects of the declaration made by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad on September 2001, that Malaysia is an Islāmic country. These articles explain the positive and negative impacts of the announcement that affects inter-faith relations which are supposed to be guided by the Constitution.

The articles entitled *Malaysia: Dilemmas of Integration*¹², *Whither, Malaysia? A Multicultural Country at the Crossroads*¹³, and *The Evolving Face of Religious Tolerance in Post-Colonial Malaysia: Understanding Its Shaping Factors*¹⁴, provide views on relations and interactions of the Malays, Chinese, and Indians. These articles highlight issues which occur among these three communities that might affect their relations such as the issue of Allāh, cow-head protest, and the seizure of the Bible. The authors of the articles offer recommendations to enlighten inter-religious affairs in Malaysia. These articles are relevant for this research for the purpose of making a comparison between Malaysia and other multi-cultural countries.

An article entitled *Non-Muslim Views about Islām and Muslims in Malaysia: An Empirical Study*¹⁵ analyses several views that can be categorized into positive, non-interference, and negative. The views were generated based on the non-Muslims' educational backgrounds and dealings with Muslims. The article also provides statistical data on non-Muslim perceptions about Islām, Islāmic literature, and Muslims.

¹² David Seah, "Malaysia: Dilemmas of Integration," *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 53, no. 1, (2000): 189-197.

¹³ Christoph Marcinkowski, "Whiter, Malaysia? A Multicultural Country at the Crossroads," *Islām and Civilisational Renewal*, vol. 1, no. 4, (2010): 705-709, 750-751.

¹⁴ Osman Bakar, "The Evolving Face of Religious Tolerance in Post-Colonial Malaysia: Understanding Its Shaping Factors," *Islām and Civilisational Renewal*, vol. 2, no. 4, (2011): 621-638, 765.

¹⁵ Thameem Ushama & Abdul Rashid Moten, "Non-Muslim Views about Islām and Muslims in Malaysia: An Empirical Study," *Intellectual Discourse*, vol. 14, no. 2, (2006): 203-215.

It explores the effect of stability of the country in relation to the interaction among the three major communities in Malaysia.

Another book on religious tolerance in religious diversity is *Religious Pluralism in Democratic Societies*. The second chapter of this book written by Hussin Mutalib agrees that religious tolerance and diversity are not alien to Islām. Hussin gives an understanding of Islām and Malays in Malaysia and Singapore, specifically their political affairs. The author concludes his discussion by stressing that the role of the State in both societies is crucial for the effective management of religious pluralism¹⁶. This book also covers the topic of religion in Malaysia, freedom of religion, inter-religious dialogue, religious conflict, and challenges and prospects for religious pluralism.

The work of Muhammad Nur Manuty and Wan Ji Wan Hussin entitled *Polemik Isu Kalimah Allāh: Antara Targhib dan Tarhib*¹⁷ is reviewed specifically to explain the controversial issue of using the word ‘Allāh’ as a translation of *God* by the Christians in their books. The authors explain non-Muslims’ rights, cause of prohibition, and the Islāmic perspective on the issue. The work also provides the cause, solution, and the press statements about the issue. This book explains the misunderstanding that occur in Malaysia with regard to the relationship of different religions. The book is designed to educate Malaysian Muslims and non-Muslims about optimism (*al-targhib*) and pessimism (*al-tarhib*) when facing such issues.

¹⁶ Hussin Mutalib, “Religious Diversity and Pluralism in Southeast Asian Islām: The Experience of Malaysia and Singapore” in *Religious Pluralism in Democratic Societies: Challenges and Prospects for Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States in the New Millenium*, edited by K. S. Nathan (Singapore: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), 2007), 35-60.

¹⁷ Muhammad Nur Manuty & Wan Ji Wan Hussin, *Polemik Isu Kalimah Allāh: Antara Targhib dan Tarhib*, (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Ilham Baru, 2010), 57-112.

The articles entitled *The Rule of Law and Legal Pluralism in Malaysia*¹⁸ and *Legal Provisions and Restrictions on the Propagation of Non-Islāmic Religions among Muslims in Malaysia*¹⁹ examine the aspect of social integration, national security and national unity in a multi-racial country, within a firmly controlled federation. These articles ascertain that multiculturalism in Malaysia is bound by three justifications related to the special status and position of Islām in Malaysia, the key role of Malay Rulers in preserving the sanctity of Islām, and the nature of Islāmic teachings and the maxim that apostasy is a crime. These two articles provide comprehensive solutions for the dilemmas, challenges, and problems in religious diversity in Malaysia according to the rule of law.

Educational Aspect of Religious Awareness and Tolerance

A review of the educational aspect of multiculturalism in Malaysia is conducted on the articles entitled *Education Policies and Practices to Address Cultural Diversity in Malaysia: Issues and Challenges*²⁰, *Educational Development and Reformation in Malaysia: Past, Present and Future*²¹, *Interracial Bridging Social Capital among Students of a Multicultural University in Malaysia*²², and *The Actualization of the Malaysian National Education Philosophy in Secondary Schools: Student and Teacher Perspectives*²³ which examine the effects of racial interaction and socialization in the

¹⁸ Constance Chevallier-Govers, "The Rule of Law and Legal Pluralism in Malaysia," *Islām and Civilisational Renewal*, vol. 2, no. 1, (2010): 1-14.

¹⁹ Zuliza Mohd Kusrin, Zaini Nasohah, Mohd al-Adib Samuri, & Mat Noor Mat Zain, "Legal Provision and Restrictions on the Propagation of Non-Islāmic Religion among Muslims in Malaysia," *Kajian Malaysia*, vol. 31, no. 2, (2013): 1-18.

²⁰ Suseela Malakolunthu & Nagappan C. Rengasamy, "Education Policies and Practices to Address Cultural Diversity in Malaysia: Issues and Challenges," *Prospects*, vol. 42, no. 2, (2012): 147-159.

²¹ Rahimah Haji Ahmad, "Educational Development and Reformation in Malaysia: Past, Present and Future," *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol. 36, no. 5, (1998): 462-475.

²² Ezhar Tamam, "Interracial Bridging Social Capital among Students of a Multicultural University in Malaysia," *Journal of College Student Development*, vol. 54, no. 1, (2013): 85-97.

²³ Shafeeq Hussain Vazhathodi al-Hudawi, Rosy Lai Su Fong, Mohammed Borhandden Musah, & Lokman Mohd Tahir, "The Actualization of the Malaysian National Education Philosophy in Secondary

Malaysian school system and higher education. There is an agreement that the education of people of diverse demographic backgrounds in Malaysia has a direct influence on their socioeconomic development. Therefore, for this research, the level of understanding of religious diversity is also related to the educational background of the respondents.

Another thesis related to this topic is entitled *Inter-Religious Dialogue in Malaysia: A Study of the Dialogue Designs and Their Effect on the Level of Understanding and Prejudice*. This thesis explores the way inter-religious dialogues are conducted in Malaysia. It studies the effectiveness of the dialogues for increasing understanding and reducing prejudice. The importance of the relationship building process through inter-religious dialogue was also discussed. This study also proposes a model for inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia (i.e. the elite and grassroots model)²⁴.

Political Aspect of Religious Awareness and Tolerance

A thesis entitled *The Islāmization of Politics in Malaysia: How Religious Political Opportunities and Threats Influence Religious Framing and Counterframing*²⁵ historically researches the inter-religious and inter-cultural relations in Malaysia and its development throughout the trials and tribulations of building a multi-ethnic state in Malaysia. Social contract, religious freedom, Malay-Muslim rulers, Bumiputeraism, Islāmīc revivalism, political accommodation, and religious and racial division are also mentioned.

Schools: Student and Teacher Perspectives,” *International Education Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4, (2014): 57-69.

²⁴ Arfah Ab. Majid, “Inter-Religious Dialogue in Malaysia: A Study of the Dialogue Designs and Their Effect on Level of Understanding and Prejudice,” (Ph. D. dissertation, International Islāmīc University Malaysia, 2013), 240-243.

²⁵ Wan Kamal Wan Napi, “The Islāmization of Politics in Malaysia: How Religious Political Opportunities and Threats Influence Religious Framing and Counterframing,” (Ph. D. dissertation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2007), 1-13.

Another set of articles relevant to this study include *The Challenge of Building a Multi-Ethnic State in Malaysia*²⁶, *National Security and Malay Unity: The Issue of Radical Religious Elements in Malaysia*²⁷, *The Politics of Accommodation and the Problem of Nation-Building in a Plural Society: The Case of Malaysia*²⁸, and *Religion, Human Rights and Constitutional-Contract Politics in Malaysia*²⁹. They pertain to the contributions and competition of political parties such as UMNO³⁰, PAS³¹ and DAP³², non-governmental organizations such as ABIM³³, JIM³⁴ and SIS³⁵, and inter-faith commissions such as IFCM³⁶, IRC³⁷ and MCCBCHST³⁸.

Many works have focused on religious diversity in Malaysia, yet no in-depth research has been conducted on the awareness of Malaysians in order to measure their assimilation of understanding other religions. No statistical data has yet to be documented as a measurement of religious awareness among Malaysians. The works differ in their approaches and methodologies. This research comprises library research and fieldwork and contains textual and contextual aspects. The fieldwork will support the library research in the evaluation and analysis of this research.

²⁶ Dicky Sofjan & Ewa Trojnar, "The Challenge of Building a Multi-Ethnic State in Malaysia," *Hemispheres*, no. 26, (2011): 147-161, 180.

²⁷ Kamarulnizam Abdullah, "National Security and Malay Unity: The Issue of Radical Religious Elements in Malaysia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 21, no. 2, (1999): 261-282.

²⁸ Harun Ruhanas, "The Politics of Accommodation and the Problem of Nation-Building in a Plural Society: The Case of Malaysia," *Islām and Civilisational Renewal*, vol. 1, no. 4, (2010): 577-594,749.

²⁹ Marzuki Mohamad, "Religion, Human Rights and Constitutional-Contract Politics in Malaysia," *Intellectual Discourse*, vol. 16, (2008): 155-186.

³⁰ UMNO is United Malays National Organisation or Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu.

³¹ PAS is Parti Islām Se-Malaysia or Pan-Malaysian Islāmīc Party.

³² DAP is Democratic Action Party or Parti Tindakan Demokratik.

³³ ABIM is Angkatan Belia Islām Malaysia or Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia.

³⁴ JIM is Jamaah Islah Malaysia.

³⁵ SIS is Sisters in Islām.

³⁶ IFCM is Interfaith Commission of Malaysia.

³⁷ IRC is Inter-Religious Council.

³⁸ MCCBCHST is Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism.