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The Religious Practices of Deaf Muslims in Malaysia: A Case Study at the Special Education School

ABSTRACT: *The religious practice in everyday life is part of the manifestation of religion and belief of every human being. Within the Islamic context, for example, religious practices must be one that stems from the Islamic religious laws. All Muslims, including the deaf, need to perform their religious obligations within their abilities. However, not much attention is given to people with disability, such as the deaf, with regards to observing their religious practices and in understanding the related problems that they face. This article serves to explain religious practices of the deaf Muslims through a research conducted at a Special Education School (for the Deaf) in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah and the Activity Centre, Society for the Welfare of the Deaf in Terengganu, Malaysia. This study employs the survey method, which uses the questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. Among the aspects of religious practices observed are acts of worship like prayer and fasting, as well as general practices like eating habits, and ways of dressing. The study showed that the hearing impaired also perform religious practices in their daily life, although a majority of them are unable to perform them completely.*

KEY WORD: Religious Practices; Deaf; Muslim in Malaysia; Ability; Special Education School.

ABSTRAKSI: *"Amalan Keagamaan Orang Islam Pekak di Malaysia: Kajian Kes di Sekolah Pendidikan Khas". Amalan beragama dalam kehidupan seharian merupakan sebahagian dari manifestasi agama dan kepercayaan yang pegang oleh setiap insan. Dalam konteks Islam, misalnya, amalan beragama itu mestilah sesuatu yang bersumberkan dari syariat Islam. Semua umat Islam, termasuklah golongan pekak, perlu melaksanakannya mengikut kadar kemampuan masing-masing. Namun, tidak ramai yang mengambil perhatian terhadap golongan OKU (Orang Kurang Upaya), seperti golongan pekak, untuk melihat amalan beragama yang mereka lakukan dan memahami masalah yang mereka hadapi. Makalah ini menjelaskan amalan beragama golongan pekak Muslim menerusi satu kajian yang dilakukan di Sekolah Pendidikan Khas (Pekak) di Kota Kinabalu, Sabah dan Pusat Aktiviti, Persatuan Kebajikan Pekak di Terengganu, Malaysia. Kajian menggunakan kaedah survey, dengan instrumen soal selidik bagi pengumpulan data. Antara aspek amalan beragama yang dilihat ialah amal ibadah khusus seperti solat dan puasa, juga amalan umum seperti kebiasaan pemakanan, dan cara berpakaian. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa golongan pekak turut melaksanakan amalan beragama dalam kehidupan mereka, walaupun sebahagian besar daripada mereka tidak dapat melaksanakan dengan sempurna.*

KATA KUNCI: Amalan Beragama; Pekak; Muslim di Malaysia; Keupayaan; Sekolah Pendidikan Khas.

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Suggested Citation: Mohad, Abd Hakim, Ros Aiza Mohd Mokhtar & Nizaita Omar. (2018). "The Religious Practices of Deaf Muslims in Malaysia: A Case Study at the Special Education School" in *INSANCITA: Journal of Islamic Studies in Indonesia and Southeast Asia*, Volume 3(1), February, pp.51-64. Bandung, Indonesia and BS Begawan, Brunei Darussalam: Minda Masagi Press owned by ASPENSI and BRIMAN Institute, ISSN 2443-2776.

Article Timeline: Accepted (November 10, 2017); Revised (January 15, 2018); and Published (February 28, 2018).

INTRODUCTION

Religious life is an important aspect to develop within every individual, including those who are disabled. It is a powerful catalyst in strengthening the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual features of a person. Religious perfection would enable a human being to moderate his or her thoughts and actions appropriately. Life becomes more orderly, more commitment is seen in the religious practices and activities, more awareness and high work motivation, responsibility towards family, and more driven to increase one's life (Harris & Enfield, 2003; George *et al.*, 2000; Ayad, 2012; and Jones, 2016).

In Malaysia, OKU (*Orang Kurang Upaya*), or the disabled, is defined as following here:

[...] a person with long term disabilities in terms of physical, mental, intellectual, or senses when interacting with various challenges, which can hinder complete and effective participation within society (JKM Malaysia, 2008).

The deaf is one group of OKU (*Orang Kurang Upaya* or Disabled), who suffer disability of the auditory senses. They can be, further, categorized into two groups: those whose auditory senses do not function at all; and another group, those whose hearing is dependent on the usage of hearing aids (PKKPM, 1975). For those who suffer hearing loss since they were young, they also experience speech disabilities and are also categorized as mute.

Physically, those from the deaf community seem to be similar to an average person. The disability, which is hidden, is the reason the deaf sidelined in terms of communication and information

dissemination is not widely accessible to them (Lash, 2011; and Attfield, 2013). They are more unfortunate compared to the other OKU groups, because they are unable to effectively communicate with the outside world. The only form of communication with the outside world is through the usage of the sign language. Due to the lack in the number of individuals who know how to communicate in sign language, the deaf remain neglected in various aspects and lose the opportunity to fully enjoy life (Malloy, 2003; and Humphries, 2012).

Scenario of the Deaf Community in Malaysia. The research conducted by the WHO (World Health Organization) discovered that one in every four children is born with hearing loss or are deaf (Duthey, 2013; and WHO, 2016). In Malaysia, apart from physical disability, there are approximately 2,000 deaf babies born every year. The statistics from the JKM (*Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat* or Department of Social Welfare) showed the registration of the deaf community have reached 43,788 in 2011; and 23,693 from the total figure of the deaf which is 39,824 in 2010 are Malays (Ibrahim, 2007; Kamaruddin, 2007; and Zawi, Lian & Abdullah, 2014).¹

If the definition of Malay, according to Item 160 of the Malaysian Constitution is used (Bari & Shuhaib, 2004), then the number also represents the deaf community who are Muslims. New registrations in that year was 3,964 with those from the Malay ethnicity as many as 2,255 (JKM Malaysia, 2008). The record only shows those who have registered with

¹See also "Statistik Pekak". Available online at: <http://www.jkm.gov.my/index> [accessed in Bandar Baru Nilai, Malaysia: September 16, 2017].

the Department of Social Welfare; and what is certain is that there is still a large number from the deaf community, who have not registered.²

Religious Obligations of the Deaf in the Islamic Law. Islam is a *fitriah* religion, which is born for every person. Each human being deserves and is capable of embracing Islam as a religion and way of life. Islam never views its followers as different in terms of appearance or physical outlook in order to attain a high position beside Allah (Emerick, 2013; and Abdalati, 2015).

An individual who is not physically perfect, such as those who are deaf, deserve to receive the high honour and glory in Islam as well. Due to the fact that Islam places a high *maqām* on those who are pious, so the effort to attain *takwa* or godliness has to be grabbed by every Muslim, including those who are physically disabled too (Parwez, 2015). This is according to Allah's commandment, which states in the *Al-Qur'an* (holy book of Islam), *Surah al- ujurāt:13*, as follows: "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you" (cited in Ebrahim, 1996).

Islam also exalts matters, which relates to the seeking of knowledge, whether or not the Muslim individual is categorized as normal or physically disabled. The determination to obtain a deeper understanding of Islam can only be achieved through the process of knowledge excavation. Hence, obtaining knowledge

is one of the pursuits of Islam (Emerick, 2013; Abdalati, 2015; and Parwez, 2015).

The right to learn and obtain knowledge is the basic right of every human being. In Islam, the rights of the disabled to learn and deepen their knowledges are not to be neglected. In the history of Islam, it is recorded that one day Prophet Muhammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or peace be upon him) was visited by Abdullah bin Ummu Maktum, a person who was visually impaired. At that moment, Prophet Muhammad SAW was busy attending to a group of Quraisy administrators in an effort to preach to them, while Abdullah bin Ummu Maktum was alone (el-Naggar, 2014). During that incident, Allah SWT (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* or God Almighty) bestowed a revelation through verses 1-11 from *surah 'Abasa* in the *Al-Qur'an*, which states as following here:

He (Prophet Muhammad SAW) frowned and turned away, because there came to him the blind man. But what would make you perceive (his intentions O Muhammad)? Perhaps, he wants to be purified (through religious teachings that can be gained from you)! or he wants a reminder, so that the remembrance can benefit him. As for he who thinks himself without need, without any desire any more (towards the teachings of *Al-Qur'an*), hence it is to him you give unwavering attention. Although no blame is upon you, if he does not want to be purified (from disobedience). But, as for he who comes to you, with fear (of breaking the commandments of Allah), so you will delay in attending to him. Do not ever behave in such a manner again! Indeed, these verses of the *Al-Qur'an* are the (sufficient) teaching and reminder (cited in Unal, 2016).

Even though the story above is about the "blind man", but it represents the other groups of people with disability also. This is in accordance with the method,

²See "Country Report Malaysia, the 9th ASEAN & Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies: Human Resource Development in the Sectors of Welfare and Health – with a Focus on Capacity Building of Service Providers and Employability Promotion of Vulnerable People". Available online at: http://www.mhlw.go.jp/bunya/kokusaigyomu/asean/2011/dl/Malaysia_CountryReport.pdf [accessed in Bandar Baru Nilai, Malaysia: September 16, 2017].

which is in the *tafsir* knowledge and have been applied by many of the *tafsir* theologians which is *al-ibrah bi umūm al-lafzā bi khusus al-sabab* or “teachings taken from the utterance generally not due to the specific passing down of a particular *Al-Qur’anic* verse” (Shahbah, 1992). This group of people should not be overlooked in the process of acquiring knowledge and the evangelisation of Islam.

For the deaf community who are Muslims, they need to learn and understand the religion to perform the religious obligations and teachings. No exemption is given to the deaf in fulfilling his or her particular religious obligation, because it has been set within the *Al-Qur’an*. Some questions constantly arise as a dilemma for the deaf community, whilst in their process of deepening their religious experience. Among them are problems in the delivery and teaching of *fardhu ain* (individual obligation), the interpretation of the contents of the *Al-Qur’an*, listening to the Friday sermons, fulfilling the *Hajj* in Mecca, and other issues which are considered difficult for those who face problems with their hearing (the receiver), as well as for those religious (deliverer) who explain and clarify teachings (Broesterhuizen, 2005; and Sham, Tibek & Othman, 2007).

Generally, the deaf can still communicate by using sign language. Hence, there are no obstructions for them to gain religious knowledge as long as they are mentally sound. This is because their mind is still sane and as long as they are sane, they have the responsibility as any other Muslim has. Thus, being deaf without any mental disability does not remove the obligation or lose the *taklif* for them to perform their religious duty

(Barnes, 1992; Sham, Tibek & Othman, 2007; and el-Naggar, 2014).

The position of the deaf as an accountable person, or *mukallaf*, is based on the *fatwa* of the Islamic theologians. Among them is Syeikh Abd al-Aziz al-Baz (1992). According to him, if one is mute and deaf altogether, or blind and deaf, he or she is still an accountable person but within his or her capacity, because they may not be able to fully grasp the teachings of Islam which has been taught to him or her (al-Baz, 1992). Due to the fact that they are able to understand the Islamic teachings in whatever manner possible, they are included in the group of those who are accountable or *mukallaf* (al-Baz, 1992; and al-Sharif, 2007).

The basis of the need to fulfil religious obligation, such as prayers even though they are unable to hear and not able to proclaim the verses, is that the deaf can still see and observe the mannerisms of other individuals who perform their prayers; hence, they may be able to emulate the actions of worship. They are obligated to execute the commandments of the Allah within their ability, because Islam is not a religion which causes inconvenience or burden (Badi, 2002). This is revealed in words of Allah in the *Al-Qur’an*, *surah* (chapter) *Al-Baqarah*:286, which states: “*Allah does not burden one unless it matches his or her ability*” (cited in Unal, 2016).

For example, the way a deaf person performs his or her prayers may not be the same as a normal person, because they are unable to recite the *Al-Fātihah* which is one of the precepts of performing prayers. How can the deaf recite and memorise the *Al-Fātihah*, if they cannot hear and vocalize the Arabic alphabets (*hijaiyah*),

what more to recite it, when they are unable to speak?

In this matter, the concept of worship from the understanding of commandment and obligation can be taught to the deaf through sign language. The *Al-Fātihah* verses, particularly, need to be learned by this group because as a precept; these verses need to be recited and the recitation be detected, and they can be read silently. If this group is able, to recite that particular *surah* (chapter), then he or she needs to recite it. However, if still unable to do so, it is sufficient that they utter the *zikir* by moving their tongue to the length of 7 verses of the *Al-Fātihah*. Or if they are still unable to fulfil that, they need to remain silent for the duration of the recitation of the *Al-Fātihah* (al-Baz, 1992; and Manan, 2015).

Either way, the deaf are not able to take a short cut and be satisfied only with the utterance of the name of Allah SWT in place of the *Al-Fātihah* whilst praying, as mentioned above; conversely, they need to strive to learn and to increase their knowledge within the religious field.

Previous Research. In the Islamic context, the religious practice which is known as *taddayyun*, in the Arabic language, consists of things which relate to thought, speech, and every action in life (al-Qaradawi, 1984). Typically, religious practice leans on the knowledge and understanding of Islam as a religion (Zulkiple & Salimah, 2006).

There are several studies that have been conducted which are related to the religious practices of the deaf. Zalihah Isa (2007)'s study surmised that the deaf can also be seen as those who are unsuccessful in developing their spirituality and religious practices (Isa, 2007). The

challenges in *fardhu ain* (individual obligation) teachings, interpretation of the contents of the *Al-Qur'an*, the delivery of the Friday sermons, explanation on ways to perform the *Hajj*, and others matters are among the issues that have not been fully resolved for the deaf in the effort to increase religious understanding within the deaf community (Hashim, 1994; Isa, 2007; and Salleh, 2009).

Another study was by Mohd Huzairi bin Awang@Husain *et al.* (2010), in which the result of this research showed that the perception towards *fardhu ain*, whether from the aspect of interest, importance, and P&P (*Pengajaran & Pembelajaran* or Teaching and Learning) of the teachers, remained at the level of moderate and need improvement (Awang@Husain *et al.*, 2010). According to them, deaf students were interested in learning *fardhu ain* and considered the learning of *fardhu ain* important in their life, but at the same time they considered the P&P sessions to not mean much. The implication of this is that students did not pay attention to the P&P of *fardhu ain* classes which, ultimately, led to the lack in mastering the basic points of *fardhu ain* (Salleh, 2009; and Awang@Husain *et al.*, 2010).

Consequently, Mohd Huzairi bin Awang@Husain *et al.* (2010) proposed that teachers need to attempt to motivate the students to deepen their knowledge of *fardhu ain*, to make the teaching and learning sessions of *fardhu ain* interesting and give meaning to the students by employing various methods, like student-centred learning, the technique of explanation coupled with practical and demonstration, the technique of problem-solving and learning based on the mosques, so that students may feel

that P&P *fardhu ain* is something to look forward to and that they would be interested to attend it (cf Awang@Husain *et al.*, 2010; and Zin, 2011).

Another study by Abdul Munir Haji Ismail (2009) was related to the preaching or evangelization to the deaf. He used the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia as the location of study. The study inclined towards the attempts of understanding the deaf from the angle of behaviour, character, taboos, and their interests or likes (Ismail, 2009). This study also identified the evangelization efforts which were conducted and the problems faced. The study was almost similar to the one conducted by Juwairiah Hasan (2009) pertaining the evangelization on the deaf of Terengganu in Malaysia (Hasan, 2009).

The research conducted by Nor Salimah Abu Mansor (2007) was more towards the religious appreciation of the deaf. Among the research objects was to measure the religious appreciation of the deaf and the links of religion in the shaping of the individual and their attitude. This study found that deaf individuals who have high religious knowledge will possess a way of life which is more orderly, more committed in practice and religious activity, possess awareness, and high motivation at work are responsible towards the family and more energised to improve his or her life (Mansor, 2007).

METHOD

This research employs the method of survey as a main method to gather data through questionnaire as an instrument, and also the method of interview to gain deeper input (Abramson & Abramson, 1999; Creswell, 2009; Gibson *et al.*, 2010; and Sargeant, 2012). As many as 100

questionnaires were distributed with the help of translators and 80 were returned which amounted to 80%.

The survey was conducted on the deaf at two locations in Sabah and Terengganu in Malaysia. The location of the study in Sabah was the Special Education School in Kota Kinabalu. Whereas the location of study selected in Terengganu was the Activity Centre, Society for the Welfare of the Deaf, Terengganu. The choice of the Special Education School which is located at Kilometre 28 Tuaran Road, Kota Kinabalu was made, because it is the one and only school in Sabah under the wing of the Malaysian Ministry of Education, which focuses on the children have hearing impairment. Whereas the Activity Centre, Society for the Welfare of the Deaf, Terengganu was chosen, because this Activity Centre is among the most active centres that cares for the welfare of the deaf in Terengganu through the various programmes, including education and religious programmes.

The questionnaire uses a 3 scale answer only, for example: “yes”, “no” and “sometimes”. This is made in consideration of the deaf, who may be unable to grasp certain complex matters of the research. The researchers present 3 main constructs: familial and community relationships; religious practices; and attitude towards learning religion. The discussion of the paper is more inclined towards the religious practices of this group.

The item to measure the religious practices was arranged through the modification of the MRPMI (Muslim Religiosity-Personality Measurement Inventory) as measurement model of Muslim religiosity framework (Abdullah *et al.*, 2005). According to this framework,

Table 1:
Profile of the Respondents

Item	Details	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	47	
	Female	33	
Age	Below 15 years	42	
	16-30 years	25	
	31-45 years	6	
	46-60 years	6	
	60 years and above	1	
Level of Education	No formal education	3	
	UPSR	47	
	PMR/SRP/LCE	23	
	SPM/MCE/'O' Level	7	
Job Classification	Government	1	
	Private	2	
	Self-Employed	8	
	Student	62	
	Unemployed	7	
Marital Status	Single	72	
	Married	8	
Institution	Special Education School	40	
	Society for the Welfare of the Deaf	40	

one of the paradigms of religion is manifestation of religious beliefs through practices such as prayers, fasting, and more (cf Abdullah *et al.*, 2005; Othman & Hariri, 2012; and Roth *et al.*, 2012). The next data is analysed descriptively. See table 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research on religious practices in table 2 showed that 67.5% of the respondents perform *fardhu* (obligation) prayers everyday; 1.3% do not pray; and 31.2% sometimes pray. On the question of fasting during *Ramadhan* month: 91% of the respondents fast; 5.1% do not fast; and 3.8% sometimes fast. Related to dressing up respectfully: 89.7% of the respondents dress respectfully; 7.7% do not do so; and 2.6% only dress up

respectfully sometimes. On the matters of food: 89.7% of the respondents eat at Islamic-owned eateries; and 10.3% do not eat at Islamic-owned eateries.

On the question of drinking liquor: 10.3% of the respondents drink; 85.9% do not drink; whereas 3.8% drink once in a while. Regarding reciting the *Al-Fātihah*: only 24.4% of the respondents can recite it; 70.5% do not know how to recite the *Al-Fātihah*; and 5.1% can read a bit.

Respondents (male) who perform the Friday prayers are 84.5%; whereas 15.5% do not perform Friday prayers. Respondents (female) who own a *telekung* or prayer garment is 61.5%; whereas 38.5% do not own a *telekung*. Respondents (female) who perform the mandatory cleansing (*mandi wajib*) after their menses are as many as 64.7%;

Table 2:
 Analysis on Religious Practices

No	Item	Scale (%)		
		Yes	No	Sometimes
1.	I perform the <i>fardhu</i> prayer everyday.	67.5	1.3	31.2
2.	I fast during <i>Ramadhan</i> .	91.0	5.1	3.8
3.	I dress respectfully.	89.7	7.7	2.6
4.	I will dine in Islamic eateries.	89.7	10.3	-
5.	I drink liquor/ <i>tuak</i> /something of a similar nature.	10.3	85.9	3.8
6.	I know how to recite the <i>Al-Fātiḥah</i> .	24.4	70.5	5.1
7.	I go to the mosque to fulfil my Friday prayers obligation (for males only).	84.5	15.5	-
8.	I own a <i>telekung</i> /prayer garment (for females only).	61.5	38.5	-
9.	I perform the mandatory cleansing (<i>mandi wajib</i>) after my menses (for females only).	64.7	35.3	-
10.	I attend religious studies.	89.3	2.7	8.0

whereas 35.3% do not perform the mandatory cleansing. Respondents who attend religious study are 89.3%; those who do not attend religious study are 2.7%; and the remaining 8% sometimes attend religious study. See again table 2.

Based on the results of this study, overall the deaf perform religious practices well. Apart from that, they also own a positive attitude towards religious studies. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement, especially related to specific religious practices. It is rather disheartening when we are presented with the facts that only 24.4% of the respondents are able to recite the *Al-Fātiḥah*. Whereas we are all aware that reciting the *Al-Fātiḥah* is one of the precepts of prayers that cannot be neglected (cf Michon, 2008; and Unal, 2016). Although the percentage of respondents who perform prayers daily is high that is 67.5%, a large number of them pray, but are unable to perform their prayers completely as they still do not know how to recite the surah *Al-Fātiḥah*.

Furthermore, the result which shows that 35.3% of the female respondents

do not perform the mandatory cleansing (*mandi wajib*) is rather shocking. This is due to the fact that this practice of cleansing is a religious ritual, which is an action and is easily accomplished. This matter places them in state of impurity at all times. In other words, they are also unable to perform other religious practices, which are specific like prayers and fasting.

Among the actions which are prohibited by religion, which needs to be curbed, is the drinking of liquor (Zulkiple & Salimah, 2006). Even though the percentage is not high that is around 10.3% only, the impact on their lives is major. This may lead them to run further away from religious practices and lead them to other more negative activities like gambling and more.

The question that may arise in our minds is why are the deaf fallen in terms of religion, when 89.3% of the respondents attend religious studies? Where has it gone wrong? Have we ever asked ourselves how these people who hard of hearing follow the religious classes? In fact, this problem relates closely with the P&P (*Pengajaran & Pembelajaran* or Teaching and Learning)

method which they underwent. The matter related to the teaching of *fardhu ain* (individual obligation), translation of the contents of the *Al-Qur'an*, presentation of the Friday sermons, explanation on how to perform religious rituals, and more are still not conducted well in the attempt to improve the religious understanding of deaf (Isa, 2007; Isgandarova, 2011; and Mansor, 2011).

This is because the delivery of religion can only be transmitted to this group through sign language. Furthermore, the number of those who have background in religious education and are able to deliver the Islamic teachings through sign language is minimal. Trained translators who can translate religious materials are limited as well. Not all trained translators can translate religious materials, because there are many terms in the Islamic faith that need to be understood clearly (*cf* Reiss, 2000; Mansor, 2007 and 2011; and Elewa, 2014).

This phenomena is not only experienced in our country, Malaysia, but also in other countries. The same problem is also faced by the Egyptians, who have two to four million people who are hard of hearing. The Islamic message that needs to be delivered is very far off from this group of people, because of the lack of sign language translators (cited in WHO, 2011 and 2016).

The failure to communicate with the deaf effectively causes their welfare and needs to be constantly neglected, including in the matters of religion (Isa, 2007; and Wilson, Miles & Kaplan, 2008). They face difficulty in expressing their problems, questions, and views when dealing with the religious departments or religious institutions. Moreover, most of the time

the issue that they face would take a long time to settle or sometimes get ignored, due to the lack of staff in the particular sector that is able to communicate via sign language (Isa, 2007; Mansor, 2007; and Wilson, Miles & Kaplan, 2008).

The deaf also depends solely on their visual senses, besides using sign language to receive information. The usage of the method of teaching by using the visual strength, besides sign language, can interest this group to follow the religious education, especially among the teenagers. Yet up until today, most societies use the traditional approach, without the use of teaching aid, in handling religious classes for the deaf (Isa, 2007; Mansor, 2007; Dye, Hauser & Bavelier, 2008; and Banner & Wang, 2011).³

Furthermore, the implementation of the religious studies programme for this group of people relies heavily on the strength of the educators, who are able to use sign language without the preparation of a specific module, which is effective for the deaf. Besides that, the teaching aid which is prepared for the deaf in Malaysia is also lacking. Even though some of the deaf are able to read, some of them still require further explanation on religious issues through the medium of sign language (Hurlbut, 2000; Isa, 2007; Mansor, 2007).

The production of a VCD (Video Compact Disc) on how to pray in sign language, in 2009, made by the Malaysian Association of the Deaf with the collaboration of the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia or JAKIM (*Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat*)

³See also, for example, an interview with Ismail Muda, *Pengerusi Persatuan Kebajikan Pekak* or Official of Deaf Development United of Terengganu, in Gong Kapas, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, on 20 December 2011.

Malaysia is one of the purest efforts, which has ever been conducted (Isa, 2007; and Mansor, 2007).⁴

However, the VCD collection of this likeness is lacking in production, while attempting to improve the basic knowledge of the deaf. Other materials that have been produced is a book entitled the *Modul Fardu 'Ain Orang Kelainan Upaya Pendengaran* (the *Fardhu Ain* Module for the Hearing Impaired), a publication of University of Islamic Science, Malaysia. Among the titles that they broached is the religious precepts, *taharah*, *wuduk* and prayer, tithes, and hajj. Yet, this module is too brief and is not sufficient to be used as a guide to conduct the *fardhu ain* for the deaf (cf Isa, 2007; Isgandarova, 2011; Mansor, 2011; and Ghani, Jailani & Junoh, 2013).

It is our responsibility to deliver the Islamic teachings to them via the most suitable methods. Although there are many differences in views in terms of the law of preaching to the deaf, the view that is the lightest is the *fardhu kifayah* (social obligation), which states that the Muslim follower cannot run away from the responsibility of delivering Islamic teachings to them (Salleh, 2009; and Ismail, 2014). What is more worrisome is the failure to live a religious life, due to the disability experienced and the constraints faced in deepening one's faith, which causes the deaf to be involved in detrimental behavior (Broesterhuizen, 2005; Isa, 2007; and Imhoff, 2017).

Research has shown many misdemeanors, marital problems and

divorces, apostasy, and more matters related to Islam happening within the community of the deaf in Malaysia (Isa, 2007; Mansor, 2007 and 2011; and Zainab, Wan-Ibrahim & Asyraf, 2014).

CONCLUSION ⁵

On the whole, religious practice within the deaf community is healthy. However, there is much room for improvement particularly ones that involve the practice of *fardhu ain* (individual obligation), such as prayer. It cannot be denied that the deaf are quite left behind in terms of specific worship practices, which involve certain recitations due to their physical disability.

The issue of religious practice of the deaf in Malaysia needs to be given serious and reasonable attention by all parties, including parents, teachers, the community, and the authorities, particularly the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The deaf are a special group that requires the support from all in conducting their daily life, including their religious obligations. Let us try to imagine their suffering: attending the Friday prayers, but are unable to listen to the sermon; attending the *fardhu ain* class, but not able to learn from a trained teacher; and sitting in the middle of the society, but is frequently being ignored and neglected.

Positive attitude shown by them towards religious education must be received with concrete action by the authorities, so that the welfare of this

⁴See "Scheme of Financial Assistance for the Disabled". Available online at: http://www.jkm.simple.my/content.php?pagename=skim_bantuan_kewangan_bagi_golongan_oku&lang=en [accessed in Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia: May 13, 2017].

⁵**Acknowledgement:** This research is supported by UMS (Malaysia University of Sabah) and Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia under FRGPs (Fundamental Research Grant Projects). Special thanks to all the informants and respondents for their cooperation to ensure the successful of this research. However, all contents and its interpretations related to this article are rest to Authors responsibility academically.

community will be taken care of. Whatever the excuse and difficulty faced in educating the deaf, the matter has to be overcome because they are the asset of the country, and who also have the right to education. Religious education and spirituality are the basis, which need to be strengthened in order to have religious practices to be implemented in one's daily life.⁶

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