

# A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON MUALLAF RELATED STUDIES IN MALAYSIA

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## Abstract

The number of non-Muslims who converted to Islam (Muallaf) in Malaysia maintains a positive trend. Unfortunately, studies found that the Muallaf community is having difficulty in several aspects of life particularly after they converted to Islam. Even though several studies have been employed to provide a solution to this issue, the situation has remained unsettled. Therefore, this research is conducted to systematically review existing literature on the studies related to the Muallaf community in Malaysia. The purpose of this review is to identify the gap in Muallaf studies that can be improved. This study adopted Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) as the reviewing procedure. The finding has found that the existing literature on the topic can be categorized into four major themes namely, legal matters, social interaction, preaching activity, and zakat implementation. Apart from that, this study recommends the direction of future studies should be focused on the educational aspect of the Muallaf community to improve their literacy, as this aspect was less discussed in the existing reviewed literature.

**Keywords:** Convert, *Muallaf*, PRISMA, SLR.

## INTRODUCTION

Muallaf refers to a non-Muslim who converted to Islam. In Malaysia, the number of non-Muslims converted to Islam has been gradually increasing from year to year. The number remains positive even though the world is now focusing on combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, quite several issues related to the Muallaf community have become a major concern including their knowledge literacy, religious practice, life, and wealth sustainability (Kassim et al., 2013). Therefore, continuous efforts to provide a solution to those issues are required, hence the Muallaf community's welfare is reserved.

Many attempts have been conducted previously by scholars to cater to these issues. To highlight some, many studies have been conducted related to zakat management (Aziz, 2014; Jalil & Awang, 2022), preaching missionary (R. M. @ Kawangit et al., 2012; Zamani et al., 2021), well-being welfare (Abd Majid et al., 2016) and others. Despite that, comprehensive studies that provide a review of these studies are yet to be done. Therefore, this study is conducted to systematically review the existing literature on the topic of Muallaf in the Malaysian context. The objective of this study is to provide an insight into the Muallaf studies in Malaysia, particularly those that were published in reputable journal databases i.e Web of Science (WoS) & Scopus. Thus, it may help in identifying the direction of future research related to this topic.

A systematic literature review (SLR) can provide rigorous and extensive reviewing findings. All the process involved in the reviewing process is monitored and controlled thoroughly. Therefore, the result obtained from such a study is considered comprehensive compared to the traditional approach. Many procedures have been proposed by experts in conducting SLR. In this study, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) has been adopted. PRISMA is selected because this procedure has been found adopted in the social science field of studies. Therefore, it approves the usability of this procedure in conducting a systematic literature review of the Muallaf related studies in the Malaysian context, extracted from WoS & Scopus databases.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted to perform SLR on literature related to Mu'allaf in the Malaysian context. SLR gained its popularity as a specific organized procedure that claimed can offer comprehensiveness in reviewing the literature (Higgins et al., 2011). The SLR is considered an alternative to the traditional literature review as the latter is claimed associate with several issues like transparency in its reviewing process and often lacks rigorous methodology (Snyder, 2019). SLR however more commonly used in health and medical-related studies (Berrang-Ford et al., 2015), but even so, it is still applicable to social sciences related studies as there are several attempts have been done using SLR (Kraus et al., 2020; Shaffril et al., 2018; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

### Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)

In this study, the SLR was conducted guided by the PRISMA procedure. PRISMA is acknowledged for its advantage to address the research questions clearly towards the need for a systematic review (Sierra-Correa & Cantera Kintz, 2015), besides its capability to support an extensive database of literature at a defined time based on the pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria (Shaffril et al., 2019). The resources that were used in this study were Scopus and WoS databases as both are considered robust and cover a wide range of literature collection for over twenty thousand journals on each database (Shaffril et al., 2018, 2019). Moreover, Scopus and WoS databases include social science studies in their indexing coverage which is suitable for extracting Muallaf related articles.

Prior to the PRISMA procedure, a pre-determined inclusion and exclusion have been set (see Table1). The criteria are crucial to controlling the specification of the articles that need to be extracted and analyzed. As mentioned earlier, this is the advantage of PRISMA which is to ensure the direction of the literature review is maintained to the purpose of this study. One of the inclusion criteria is regarding the literature type. Firstly, this study only focuses on the research article over the other types of literature. Therefore, the other document types such as conference proceedings, books, and reports are excluded. Secondly, this study only accepts English, Malay, and Indonesian literature language. This is to avoid confusion and difficulty in understanding the non-understandable language. The summary of the inclusion and exclusion criteria is presented in Table 1.

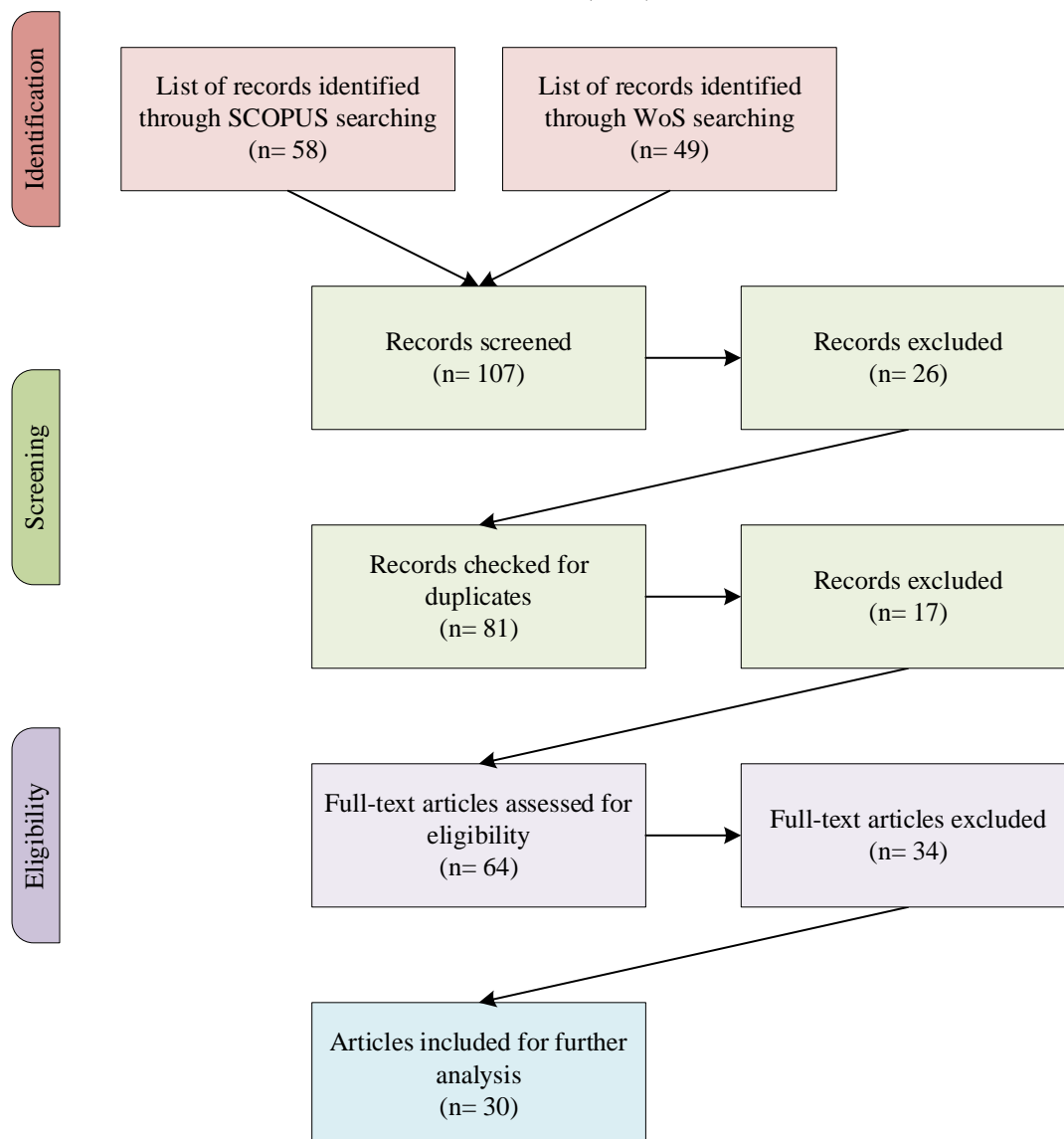
Table 1: Screening criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Literature type	Research article only	Conference proceeding, Book, and other formats.
Language	English, Malay, Indonesia	Japanese

## The systematic review procedure

In general, there are three major stages are involved in the systematic literature review procedure, namely literature identification, screening, and eligibility (see Figure 1). These stages are proposed to systematically identify the most relevant article with this study's objective before the reviewing process can be performed. The discussion of each stage is as the following:

Figure 1: Article identification and extraction process by adapting PRISMA methodology as proposed by Shaffril et al., (2018)



### 1. Identification

The systematic literature review procedure started with the identification stage to recognize the relevant literature on the Muallaf context from Scopus and WoS databases. To begin the searching, a special search string was designed for both databases (see Table 2). The search string was designed by considering the advanced searching feature provided by both databases. The elements included in the search string were the main required keywords, their synonym, and their other possible morphological structure. In general, there is a similarity between the search string for both databases, yet there is a slightly different prior to the specific coding of each database. Based on

the search conducted in December 2021, there are 58 articles in Scopus while 49 articles in WoS were identified. The articles then were combined for the analysis in the next stage.

Table 2: Search string

Database	Search String
SCOPUS	TITLE-ABS-KEY ( ( muallaf* OR mu'allaf* ) OR ( ( convers* OR convert* OR "new convers*" OR "new convert*" ) AND Islam ) AND Malaysia )
WoS	TS= ( ( muallaf* OR mu'allaf* ) OR ( ( convers* OR convert* OR "new convers*" OR "new convert*" ) AND Islam ) AND Malaysia )

## 2. Screening

In total, there are 107 articles were prepared for the screening stage. The screening stage was conducted firstly to analyze the fulfillment of the collected articles with predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1). Prior to that purpose, there were 26 articles were excluded because those articles were found either not a research articles or were written in other than Malay, English, and Indonesian language. Other than that, duplicate articles had also been taken out from the record to get the actual number of articles that will be ready for the next stage. Out of 81, there were 17 duplicates record were found and excluded. The remaining number of articles after the whole conducted screening stage was 64 articles.

## 3. Eligibility

In the eligibility stage, the remaining 64 articles underwent a preliminary analysis to ensure their relevance to the objective of this literature review. It was to ensure that all the selected articles were fit to the inclusion criteria of this current study which may not identifiable from the previous stages. The eligibility stage was conducted by conducting a quick reading of the title, abstract and main content of the articles. 34 articles were identified as not fulfilling the inclusion criteria of this study, then were excluded. Among the justifications for this exclusion was the different application of the “converts” term than the intended definition in this study, the articles did not focus on the Muallaf topic, as well as the articles reported on the conversion studies conducted outside the Malaysian context. Finally, there were 30 total articles were prepared for a thorough reviewing process. All the remaining articles are regarded as relevant articles to the Muallaf topic that focuses on the Malaysian context.

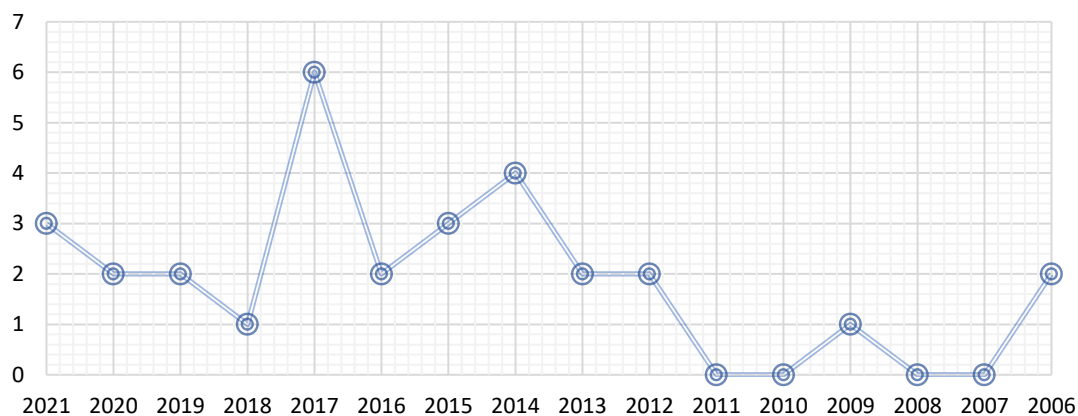
## RESULT

### General finding

Based on the review conducted of the literature, there were four themes were emerged related to the studies on Muallaf in Malaysia namely, legal matters (6 sub-themes), social interaction (3 sub-themes), preaching activity (2 sub-themes), and zakat implementation (3 sub-themes). In the perspective of the literature’s year of publication, all the 30 articles were published between 2006 to 2021. The most publication was in 2017 where six articles were published (Awang & Hambali, 2017; Baharudin & Said, 2017; Mohd et al., 2017; Mohd Khambali@Hambali et al., 2017; Haema Latha Nair et al., 2017; Heama Latha Nair & Chuan, 2017). For the remaining, there are three articles were published in 2021 (Khan et al., 2021; Samuri & Khan, 2021), two articles in 2020 (Samuri & Khan, 2020; Yasin et al., 2020), two articles in 2019 (Shaharuddin et al., 2019; Zin et al., 2019), meanwhile only one article was published in 2018 (Samuri et al., 2018). Earlier than that, two articles were published in 2016 (Abdullah, 2016; Puteh et al., 2016), three articles in 2015 (Dakir et al., 2015; R. M. Kawangit, 2015; Wu, 2015), four articles in 2014 (Johari, Aziz, et al., 2014; R. M. Kawangit, 2014; Muhamat@Kawangit & Saringat, 2014; Rahim &

Zakaria, 2014), and two articles in 2013 (Muhamat & Hamjah, 2013; Sintang et al., 2013). Apart from that, two articles were published in 2012 (Hak, 2012; Zainal Ariff, 2012), one article in 2009 (Kusrin & Muda, 2009), and finally, two articles published in 2006 (Salbiah, 2006; Shaari et al., 2006) (See figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of publication frequency by year



### Main Finding

As for the main finding, the discussion focuses on the elaboration of the identified themes. As mentioned earlier, there are four themes have emerged from the review conducted on the articles, namely legal matters, social interaction, preaching activity, and zakat implementation. Each of the themes produces specific sub-themes. As a result, the four main themes produce fourteen sub-themes in total, that inherit the perspective of the main themes (see Table 3). The explanation of each theme is as follows:

Table 3: Synthesis report of extracted articles

No.	Author	Year Published	Themes											
			Legal Matters					Social Interaction			Preaching Activity		Zakat Implementation	
			C T	I N	L L	M R	M C	N P	R R	E R	S S	P E	P S	Z D
1	Samuri & Khan, (2021)	2021			/									
2	Yasin et al., (2020)	2020								/				
3	Shaharuddin et al., (2019)	2019												/
4	Zin et al., (2019)	2019	/											
5	Haema Latha Nair et al., (2017)	2017						/						
6	Awang & Hambali, (2017)	2017							/					
7	Mohd Khambali@Hambali et al., (2017)	2017							/					

8	Heama Latha Nair & Chuan, (2017)	2017	/						
9	Dakir et al., (2015)	2015						/	
10	Wu, (2015)	2015					/		
11	Kawangit, (2015)	2015					/		
12	Kawangit, (2014)	2014						/	
13	Muhamat & Hamjah, (2013)	2013					/		
14	Sintang et al., (2013)	2013					/		
15	Zainal Ariff, (2012)	2012						/	
16	Hak, (2012)	2012		/					
17	Kusrin & Muda, (2009)	2009			/				
18	Salbiah, (2006)	2006	/						
19	Rahim & Zakaria, (2014)	2014						/	
20	Abdullah, (2016)	2016	/						
21	Puteh et al., (2016)	2016							/
22	Samuri & Khan, (2020)	2020		/					
23	Baharudin & Said, (2017)	2017	/						
24	Mokhtar et al., (2021)	2021				/			
25	Muhamat@Kawangit & Saringat, (2014)	2014						/	
26	Samuri et al., (2018)	2018			/				
27	Shaari et al., (2006)	2006					/		
28	Khan et al., (2021)	2021		/					
29	Mohd et al., (2017)	2017							/
30	Johari et al., (2014)	2014						/	

CT: Custodial matter  
 IN: Inheritance  
 LL: Language Literacy  
 MR: Marriage  
 MC: Minor conversion  
 RR: Religious Relations  
 ER: Ethnicity Relation  
 SS: Social Studies  
 PE: Preaching Effectiveness  
 PS: Preaching Strategy  
 ZD: Zakat Distribution  
 ZI: Zakat Impact  
 ZM: Zakat Management

## 1. Legal Matters

Legal provision is one of the vital factors that has been discussed by the reviewed literature regarding Muallaf in the Malaysian context. There are twelve articles in total that have been found focusing discussion on legal matters related to the Muallaf community in Malaysia. It is relatively justifiable as Malaysia practices dual-law systems that separate the common and Islamic law. Therefore, it causes many conflicts were happened in assessing the judiciary resolution on the related cases. This trend is surely affecting greatly on Muallaf community as converting to Islam will cause the Muallaf to absorb a new law set in their life, namely Islamic law.

The twelve articles can be classified and explained in six developed sub-themes. The first sub-themes that emerged namely, the marriage focuses on legal discussion related to the marriage context. Conversion of one's religion hugely impacts the marriage status of a couple. Based on the review, there are three articles were discussing the marriage context. One of the articles discusses a general legal implication of conversion to Islam on civil marriage among Muallaf in Malaysia. The study had conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with the selected respondent for this study. The result obtained from this study approved that conversion may affect the individual, family dynamics, and relationship with society (Samuri & Khan, 2020). It is supported by the other article in this sub-theme which mentions that conversion to Islam may impact the marital relationship of a couple (Hak, 2012). Moreover, another study reported that the impact of conversion also causes trouble in the enforcement aspect to enforce the court's orders as an effect of the dual-law set practices in Malaysia (Khan et al., 2021).

Next, two articles have a focus on the legal implication of custodial matters. This sub-theme also demonstrates the impact of conversion towards a family relationship, but from a custodial perspective. As mentioned earlier, a conversion of one party of a married couple may cause a divorce order between them. Unfortunately, another dispute may occur which to decide the custodial rights of their children. Therefore, a study was conducted to examine in-depth the legal provision that is practiced in Malaysia on that matter. The weakness and strengths of that particular law were drawn and discussed in a study conducted by Zin et al., (2019). Heama Latha Nair & Chuan, (2017) on the other hand conducted a study that focuses the discussion on the children's welfare and interest as a matter to be considered while awarding the custodial rights to the parents. The study concluded that the children's interests and welfare are not well protected by the current practiced law.

Other than the previous discussion, two articles have focused their discussion on the minor conversion sub-theme. This happens whenever the religion of the children should be decided after the conversion of their parents to Islam. The two studies have concluded that minor has no right to choose their religion, but their parents will determine for them instead. Meanwhile, in the case of separated parents, the right to decide the minors' religion will belong to the rightful guardian between them (Kusrin & Muda, 2009; Haema Latha Nair et al., 2017). Moreover, there is an article that has been discussed related to another sub-theme, namely, the inheritance matter. This is because, in Islam, there is a specific inheritance mechanism namely, *faraid* that only recognizes the Muslim family members in this system. Therefore, it causes a problem for the Muallaf as they have religiously separated from their family members. Therefore, a study has proposed an alternative by proposing *hibah* mechanism as a solution to the inheritance issue among the Muallaf community (Baharudin & Said, 2017).

Another study has focused on the naming policy sub-theme. This is also another issue circulating among the Muallaf community in Malaysia, particularly. The argument started when the Muallaf community is required to change their original name to an Islamic name version after converting to Islam. A study conducted by Samuri et al., (2018) has analyzed this scenario and concluded that the naming policy should be improvised. The naming policy among new converts should be implemented on an optional basis, not compulsory. Except if the original name carries an illegal definition in Islam.

Finally, based on the previous discussion, indicates the need for those who interact with the Muallaf community to have legal literacy. So three articles have been found focusing on this matter and group under a specific sub-theme namely, legal literacy. One of the studies found an important finding that the Muallaf community themselves are having low awareness of the legal provision practiced in Malaysia related to conversion to Islam (Samuri & Khan, 2021). Therefore, a study has been conducted on emphasizing the importance of having sufficient awareness of the Islamic legal system Abdullah, (2016). Salbiah (2006) on the other hand proposed an

integrated strategy among 3 components, namely, structural, substantive, and cultural as a model to improve the conflict between the dual-legal system practiced in Malaysia.

## 2. Social Interaction

The second significant factor that has been discussed by the reviewed literature regarding Muallaf in the Malaysian context is social interaction. Nine articles have been found focusing their discussion on the social interaction of the Muallaf community. This is due to the status of Malaysia which is known as a multi-racial country. This is because of the historical events that happened in Malaysia which previously had been known as a strategic location that invites several civilizations to settle in Malaysia. However, despite the differences in terms of ethnicities, races, and religion, all the community segment lives peacefully in Malaysia. Therefore, this unique situation also impacts Muallaf social interaction in Malaysia.

The nine articles can be discussed in three sub-themes namely, ethnic relations (4 articles), religious relations (3 articles), and other social studies (2 articles). As mentioned earlier, the Muallaf community's social interaction can be affected by the unique composition of the Malaysian community segment. In Malaysia, Malay is dominating in terms of ethnicity, meanwhile, Islam is the official religion practiced in Malaysia. Therefore, in the Malaysian context, these two categories are always seen as reflecting each other. This causes a dilemma occurred in the Muallaf community, as their conversion to Islam is seen as conversion into a Malay ethnicity as well. In an extreme case, it causes they are being treated differently by their former ethnicity members which to some extent causes them to be discriminated against by society.

One of the sub-theme classified in the social interaction theme is ethnic relation. One of the reviewed literature that is categorized under this sub-theme has reported harmonious relations have occurred among multi-ethnic societies in the Malaysian context. The study however was only observed in the Sabah context which reported the Muallaf can live peacefully with their other ethnicity members Sintang et al., (2013). However, ethnic relations in Malaysia sometimes may turn into a thorny issue. Thus, there is another study has suggested that there is a need for the Muallaf group to stress their actual relationship status with their ethnic members to clarify their relation to each other (Wu, 2015). An important clarification should be reiterated that converting to Islam would not change the ethnic identity. This is to reject the claim that is normalized in the Malaysian context that converting to Islam will also change their ethnic identity into Malay. It can be empirically explained by several reviewed studies that found the Muallaf community did not fully assimilate into the Malay ethnic (R. M. Kawangit, 2015; Muhamat & Hamjah, 2013). Even though the Muallaf community is well-received by the Malay-dominated Muslim community, it is solely because of the sense of sharing a religious belief, not the ethnicity basis (Wu, 2015).

Moreover, the religious inter-relation of the Muallaf community has also become a focus of reviewed literature. This is significant to be studied as the Muallaf has converted from their previous religion into Islam. Therefore, the interaction of the Muallaf community with their former religious members should be monitored. In general, Islam promotes a well inter-religious interaction. It can be reflected in a study conducted by Awang & Hambali, (2017) that reported the religious relation of the Chinese Muslim community in Terengganu has simulated a commendable interaction with the non-Muslims. Meanwhile, another study has proposed a specific guide to keeping a harmonious relationship between religions in Malaysia namely the concept of moderation (*wasatiyyah*). It was investigated by conducting in two different regions in the west and east of Malaysia. The study found that the concept of moderation can play an important role in ensuring a tolerance of social interaction between Muallaf and other religions (Mohd Khambali@Hambali et al., 2017). Unfortunately, on the negative side, tolerance between religions without proper guidance can cause the Muallaf to face difficulty in practicing comprehensive Islamic teaching as they are still influenced by their former religious practice (Mokhtar et al., 2021).

The last sub-theme focuses on the other studies that related to social studies among the Muallaf community. One of the studies has been conducted to empirically measure the impact of social support on the psychological well-being of the Muallaf. The finding shows that there is a significant impact on the measured variable Yasin et al., (2020). Therefore, it demonstrates the importance of social support for the Muallaf especially to start a new life as a Muslim. Another study has done an interesting study to analyze the coverage of media towards religious and

ethnic issues particularly involving the Muallaf community. The study found that there is an inclination for each of the reported media to be influenced by a specific viewpoint of the media agency, especially in the newspaper in reporting the case that they cover (Shaari et al., 2006).

### 3. Preaching Activity

The preaching activity that emerged as another main theme in this study focuses on all the implementation efforts to introduce Islam to the Muallaf, educate, and improve their knowledge about Islam. These are continuous processes to invite more converts into Islam yet without overlooking the effort of sustaining their knowledge. As a new convert to Islam, the Muallaf community has to receive support in terms of their knowledge of Islam. By doing so, they can develop their knowledge and improve their piousness from time to time.

Five articles have been found emerged related to the preaching activity. The five articles can be explained in two sub-themes namely, preaching strategy (2 articles), and preaching effectiveness (3 articles). To introduce Islam to non-Muslims requires an effective strategy to convince them on converting the religion that they have practiced beforehand to Islam. Among the effective strategy that has been reviewed in this study is by maximizing the function of a mosque. This strategy can be adopted by organizing relevant religious preaching programs in the mosque's annual activity (R. M. Kawangit, 2014). Besides, another study has found that the preacher who is responsible to preach non-Muslims also needs to uplift their skill to ensure effective interaction with non-Muslim. The skills are including applying politeness, strategizing topic arrangement, and infusing an element of humor while preaching (Zainal Ariff, 2012).

These strategies are crucial to ensure an impactful outcome. In terms of preaching effectiveness, there is a study that focuses on measuring the impact of preaching programs. This study found that the Muallaf community was satisfied with the preaching programs conducted by Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (PERKIM) (Rahim & Zakaria, 2014). In addition, Dakir et al., (2015) also reported the alike finding but also mentioned that the Muallaf is still lacking in terms of faith (*aqidah*) knowledge especially related to the heavenly books (*kitab samawi*). Among the suggested improvements is by inviting a serious involvement of the government to organize a national level of programs related to Muallaf knowledge empowerment (Muhamat@Kawangit & Saringat, 2014).

### 4. Zakat Implementation

The last emerging factor from the reviewed articles is “the zakat implementation”. Zakat is an Islamic philanthropic mechanism that was introduced and practiced in Islam. In terms of its operation, some percentage based on the wealth categories (i.e. – income, fund saving, business net worth, and some others) should be deposited to the appointed zakat collector (Islamic Religious Centre) and to be distributed to authorized receivers. The amount percentage to be deposited varies based on the zakat categories. Yet all the calculations are already explained in the Islamic sources, particularly Al-Qur'an and hadith. The collection then will be distributed to the rightful recipients including the Muallaf group. Many Islamic scholars agree that the wisdom of the Muallaf community was included as an authorized receiver is to give support to them to start a new life journey as Muslims.

Despite its importance, the theme of zakat in this study has been discussed by the least number of articles compared to the other major themes. There are only four articles that have been found focusing its discussion on zakat related to the Muallaf community. The four articles can be explained in three sub-themes namely, zakat distribution (2 articles), zakat management (1 article), and zakat impact (1 article). From the zakat management perspective, Mohd et al., (2017) study has found that the Islamic Religious Centre (IRC) that is responsible for collecting the zakat fund in the state of Selangor has performed well in managing the zakat. Yet, the study suggested an improvement in terms of managing the zakat fund with a more systematic procedure.

Improvement should be continuously monitored to avoid jeopardizing in managing the zakat fund particularly in distributing the fund to the rightful receiver. Another study categorized in the zakat impact sub-theme has found that there is a significant impact between the zakat distribution and the Muallaf religious practice. In another word,

receiving the zakat is significant to motivate the Muallaf to be more exuberant in improving their Islamic knowledge (Shaharuddin et al., 2019). Therefore, the zakat distribution aspect plays a pertinent role especially to welcome new converts to Islam. The last two studies are focused on the zakat distribution aspect. The two studies have reported that IRC in Malaysia has good performance in the distribution of the zakat fund (Johari, Aziz, et al., 2014; Puteh et al., 2016). Johari et al., (2014) particularly has reported that the IRC has organized more than thirty programs a year to facilitate zakat distribution to the Muallaf community.

## DISCUSSION

In this section, the Muallaf studies are discussed in two dimensions. The first dimension refers to the study on the Muallaf community which is described as any study that was conducted concerning the Muallaf self-empowerment such as Muallaf education, and knowledge literacy. On the other hand, the second dimension refers to the study conducted on the other parties that are interacting directly with the Muallaf community such as public members, non-government organizations (NGOs), and others. Both dimensions are required to be discussed to identify the strength and gaps of studies.

### Studies on Muallaf self-empowerment

The first aspect that can be discussed from the reviewing process is related to the Muallaf self-empowerment. As new converts to Islam, there are many things they have to learn to get them ready to embark on the new journey of their life as Muslims. Referring to the previous discussion, notably, the Muallaf community needs to have literacy as preparation for themselves such as understanding legal provisions in the Malaysian context (Samuri & Khan, 2021), as well as understanding social interaction (R. M. Kawangit, 2015). Yet, the reviewed study also reported an unsatisfactory level of understanding among the Muallaf community towards these elements. In extreme cases, some of them are found to have a low understanding of their right as Muallaf is particularly related to a specific location that applies different rules and regulations in managing the Muallaf community (Abdul et al., 2021). Even though there is another study has found that Muallaf has a good understanding of ethnic relations matters (Shaharuddin et al., 2016), the former situation cannot be overlooked. The situation is not only happening in these two contexts but also happening in others such as religious understanding. Therefore, their understanding level should be given attention as without an effective intervention may also affect the trend to be inherited by their future generations (Fakhrudin & Awang, 2020).

Based on the reviewed literature, several studies have been conducted focusing on highlighting the literacy issues. Unfortunately, most of the studies are too focused on explaining specific cases such as civil marriage (Samuri & Khan, 2020), custodial matters Zin et al., (2019), and minor conversion issue (Haema Latha Nair et al., 2017). The studies however did not expand their discussion on providing a mechanism for improving the Muallaf community's literacy. Therefore, a future study that can propose a specified methodology, framework, or model should be given attention. Among the initiatives proposed by the reviewed studies are optimizing mosque function specifically on the Muallaf empowerment program (Muhamat@Kawangit et al., 2013) and developing a specified Muallaf support center (Eka & Yudha, 2016). In other studies, there is a proposal to develop a comprehensive Muallaf education module to curb this literacy issue (Ab Rahman et al., 2020; Adenen et al., 2021). Even though these efforts have been initiated, improvement should be put in place considering the level of Muallaf literacy on the discussed aspect remains unsatisfactory. One of the efforts that can be suggested is by developing a comprehensive education system specifically for the Muallaf community that covers all age segments with all the relevant knowledge. This can be supported by the previous study that has found that comprehensive education may help in improving literacy in the measured aspects (Jannah et al., 2013; Rahman, 2020).

## Studies on Muallaf external-self empowerment

The second aspect that can be discussed based on the reviewed literature is the Muallaf external-self empowerment. This refers to the support systems that have an interaction with the Muallaf community such as public members, non-government organizations (NGOs), and others. All the mentioned parties had played an important role in managing the Muallaf matters in various aspects such as support in terms of moral, financial, as well as education. All these support are crucial to assist the sustainability of this community (Eka & Yudha, 2016; Johari et al., 2015, 2018; Muhamat@Kawangit et al., 2013)

Most of the reviewed studies on the Muallaf external self-empowerment focus on exploring the management aspect of each party (Johari, Mohd Ali, et al., 2014; Mohd et al., 2017), evaluating the impact of constructed programs (Muhamat@Kawangit & Don, 2021) as well as proposing a new idea such as to establish a Muallaf center (Eka & Yudha, 2016). All of these studies were conducted to ensure that the parties played their role as intended. Unfortunately, based on the reported result, the studies found that there is still a weakness in the implementation for example in managing the zakat fund that require more systematic, efficient and effective zakat management (Johari, Mohd Ali, et al., 2014; Mohd et al., 2017). Besides that, as mentioned in the previous section, the zakat theme has the least studies have been done on it (four articles). Other than that, another study also suggested optimally utilizing the function of a mosque, especially as a center that can provide information that will improve Muallaf knowledge (Muhamat@Kawangit & Don, 2021). Therefore, a future study that can propose an improvement to this situation should be given attention to ensure the Muallaf community gets sufficient support since the first day they converted to Islam.

Besides strengthening the existing support system, other new ideas that can provide support to this group also should be initiated. One of the novel ideas that has been discussed in the reviewed article is a recommendation to establish a Muallaf Centre in Malaysia that can observe all the Muallaf aspects, particularly their economic and psychological dimension. This recommendation is believed can be a source of guidance, protection, and strengthening of the Muallaf community (Eka & Yudha, 2016). Besides, as mentioned in the previous discussion, an organization that involves in constructing the Muallaf education system also can play its role in giving sufficient support to the Muallaf group by proposing a comprehensive Muallaf education system.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review reflects a basic understanding of the studies related to the Muallaf in the Malaysian context. Based on the reviewing process, there are four major themes have been identified. The first theme is legal matters which include marriage, custodial, inheritance, naming policy, and minor conversion cases among the Muallaf community. The second theme is the social interaction that encounters the study on measuring the social relationship of the Muallaf community with the surrounding people (eg. Multi-religious & multi-ethnic). The third theme is the preaching activity which focuses on the study of analyzing the preaching missionary from two aspects namely preaching strategy and effectiveness. While the last theme is related to zakat implementation. Overall, this review has successfully provided a comprehensive overview of the studies on this topic. It can be concluded that the Muallaf community has never been overlooked by scholars since many studies have been conducted in this area. Unfortunately, based on the previous discussion, there is a limitation regarding Muallaf low literacy in some aspects that should be given attention for further. Therefore, this study suggests a recommendation for further studies to propose initiatives for improving the Muallaf literacy towards the important aspects of their new converted life such as legal provision, Islamic knowledge, and their well-being matters. Among the crucial aspect that can be highlighted is the education of the Muallaf community. One of the suggestions is by providing a comprehensive education system specifically for the Muallaf community which has been less discussed.

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