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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DAKWAH AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN SCIENCE TAHFIZ SCHOOLS

Abdul Munir Ismail¹, Sulaiman Dorloh², Nik Yamcik Zainab³, Muhammad AR⁴

^{1,2,3}Fakulti Sains Kemanusiaan, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI),
Malaysia

⁴Fakultas Tarbiyahdan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

abdmunir@fsk.upsi.edu.my¹, dsulaiman@fsk.upsi.edu.my²,
nikyamchikzainab940802@gmail.com³, emhaelrahman@yahoo.com⁴

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of *dakwah* (missionary) and educational activities carried out in science *tahfiz* schools. This research was based on a qualitative approach carried out at the Science *Tahfiz* School, Tanah Merah, Kelantan, Peninsular Malaysia. The study sample consisted of 100 *tahfiz* students from year one to year five, whose ages ranged from 13 to 17 years. This sample was based on the random selection of 20 students from each of the five existing classes. The research instrument was based on a survey questionnaire consisting of 10 items to elicit information regarding respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of activities carried out in the program. Respondents' responses to each item of the questionnaire were rated along a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from '1' (*highly ineffective*) to '5' (*highly effective*). The researchers used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 2.3) software to analyze the survey data. Overall, the research findings showed the *dakwah* (missionary) program was effective in improving *tahfiz* students' understanding and knowledge of Islamic obligations as a *pendakwah* (a missionary). The students highly rated all the activities of the program based on high mean scores of the questionnaire items, especially those relating to Koranic recitation, prayers, and *zikir* (supplication). These findings underscore the importance of *dakwah* programs in helping to prepare *tahfiz* students as future leaders of Islamic missionary organizations. Hence, *dakwah* programs must be carried out in *tahfiz* schools to train the future generation of Islamic missionaries, who will continue the tradition of calling humans to become good practicing Muslims who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. For

this to materialize, such programs have to be well-planned, systematically organized, and coordinated with all relevant Islamic agencies or bodies.

INTRODUCTION

Over recent years, the number of Muslim parents sending their children to religious schools has been on a steep rise. The motivation of most parents seems to stem from their wish to see their children become *hafiz* (who can memorizes the Holy Koran) and a missionary. Also, with rising demand, many such schools have to turn down some of the applications due to limited places (MdNawi, 2014). The school administrators have to be very selective to ensure only students with excellent academic credentials and high motivation to learn the Holy Koran will be chosen. Lately, according to ZaradiSudin (2008), there is a high demand for enrolment in schools specializing in the Koranic and science curriculum. Such schools also run co-curricular religious activities to equip students with missionary knowledge to help ensure the continuance of missionary works by Muslim professionals. As shown in world history, the demise of past civilizations was due to the decadent lifestyles of the younger generations who were devoid of moral and religious values. As such, our young generation needs to learn and acquire such values and to get involved in social activities (Fariza Md. Sham, 2015). Likewise, our younger generation, such as students of science tahfiz schools, must learn and engage in academic and religious activities at an early age. Through these activities, they can fully understand and perform Islamic duties as well as to stay away from sinful acts.

According to Masuriyati and Che Zarrina (2016), social maladies affecting adolescents, including tahfiz school students, manifest in many forms, such as violating against rules, stealing, and running away from home, which have raised serious concern among parents and teachers. Surely, residential students are an important human asset needed for a strong national development (Musfirah Rozali, 2009). Thus, the implementation process of missionary works has to be consistently and systematically carried out (Fariza Md. Sham, 2015). As such, administrators of student residences have to play an important role to help in such an effort to help Muslim students develop strong personalities, faith, and piety toward Allah SWT. Hence lies several important questions that need immediate, prompt answers as follows: (a) "How effective is the missionary programs carried out in tahfiz student residences in helping tahfiz students to improve their personalities?" (b) "What about the preparation made by such administrators in terms of management strategies and facilities to ensure a smooth implementation of missionary programs?" (c) "To what extent the missionary programs at the student residences have been able to produce students who practice Islamic teaching and engage in missionary works in their residences?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Engaging in missionary works is an integral part of every Muslim's life, which is driven by his or her consciousness of the need not only to practice Islamic teaching at the individual level but also to spread the message of Islam to other human beings at the societal level. Such works can be carried out in various forms that are deemed suitable for the situation faced by the missionary and the target of such a mission. Essentially, missionary works can be carried out at the individual, societal, and institutional levels, the positive impact of which entails systematic and detailed planning (Burhanudin Abdullah, 2000). Missionary and education are closely intertwined that help disseminate knowledge, understanding, and vision to attain success in this world and the hereafter. Arguably, without these two aspects, Islam would not have reached all corners of this world. It is, therefore, important that students be exposed to missionary works and education at the early ages of their lives. In this respect, appropriate missionary programs have to be carried out by taking into account prevailing situational and global contexts as follows:

Usrah (Small Islamic Classes)

According to Ibrahim et al. (2015), the term *usrah* is synonym with small group meetings of university students in Malaysia, the main of which is to instill noble, virtuous values into students and to enhance their spiritual consciousness. The term *usrah* means family, and in a broader social context, it means a meeting in which participants discuss many aspects relating to the teaching of Islam. Organizationally, the *usrah* approach centers on several members, one of whom is nominated as a leader called a *naqib*, whose main function is to play the role of a facilitator or a moderator. The pillars of *usrah* are *ta'aruf*, *tafahum*, and *takaful* that collectively focus on the enhancement of faith and brotherhood, which provide the strong foundation of the Muslim society to attain success. In the educational context, *usrah* complement the continual efforts to develop knowledgeable, morally upright, and conscientious individuals. According to Norafidah Gordani (2017), *usrah* programs help enhance the school curriculum through activities performed outside the normal learning hours involving students and their teacher or just students. In principle, *usrah* aims to develop students with strong integrity, faith, and leadership ability and to strengthen the brotherhood and faith of Muslims (Ibrahim et al. 2015). As viewed from the socio-educational perspective, *usrah* programs can help improve students' personalities and inculcate the culture of excellence in schools (Ya'qub Muhammad Hussin, 2001).

Zikir al-Ma'thurat (Remembrance of Allah)

Zikir al-Ma'thurat is the daily remembrance of Allah that is typically performed after *Subuh* (Dawn) and *Asar* (Evening) prayers. Spiritually, the invocation of Allah's attributes induces a sense of contentment or blissfulness into the hearts of those who regularly practice it. The beautiful rendition of Allah's names helps soothes students' minds and souls so much so that they can focus on their studies. Inevitably, a human's mind is not always at peace given that an individual will face a myriad of problems either at home or at a workplace, some of which may be self-induced (Nik Md. Saiful Azizi, 2017). Thus, those experiencing stress because of extreme work pressure, family pressure, or any kind of hardships can seek spiritual refuge by practicing *Zikir al-Ma'thurat*, as one of the means to help them find the inner peace. By constantly making such a remembrance, a person's unsettling mind can gradually become peaceful and relieved. Thus, *tahfiz* students must consistently engage in such a practice of remembrance to make them spiritually and emotionally strong to face various challenges or problems, such as making preparations for the examination.

Talks

Essentially, a talk is a speech made by an invited speaker to inform or highlight a wide spectrum of issues encompassing politics, economics, religions, and others. Syahraini Tambak (2014) asserts that talks can be either a one-way or two-way communication process to explain or provide information to a group of listeners. From the standpoint of religion, Hana Maurin (2018) argues that talks are activities that enhance people's understanding of religious matters, the process of which carries from a person to another person and from a country to another country. As such, to make a talk forceful and informative, the speaker must have a strong oratory skill, a clear focus of the topic of interest, and sufficient facts and figures. According to Tasmana (1997), a speaker must be well-acquainted and conversant with current issues prevailing in a society such that he or she can deliver a message to the audience more forcefully. Also, when asked about an issue by the audience, the speaker can provide an answer convincingly or articulate an idea convincingly.

Lectures

In essence, a lecture is a speech given by an individual with extensive information or strong knowledge in a particular field. Typically, a lecture is delivered by the presentation of various facts and figures, culminating in the lecturer making a conclusion at the end of

his or her lecture. According to Noresah Baharom (2010), lectures are a learning process that is delivered by knowledgeable, highly qualified academics in Islamic studies in colleges and universities. In these institutions of higher learning, lectures serve as the primary means of explaining Koranic verses and prophetic *hadiths* (sayings) and the platform of discussion for religious issues, such as *fiqh* or Islamic rituals. Typically, each lecture will last not more than 90 minutes to help students learn about a particular topic of learning. In this duration, normally lecturers will spend about 45 minutes to make their presentations and use the remaining 45 minutes for 'question-and-answer' sessions. In the *tahfiz* schools, highly trained teachers in Islamic studies will give a series of lectures to their students after *Subuh* prayers (prayers at dawn) or after *Maghrib* prayers (prayers at dusk).

Program *Tahsin Solat* (*Tahsin* Prayers Program)

Prayers are one of the Islamic pillars that every able Muslim must observe as a testimony of his or her faith. In fact, the five-time daily prayers are the second pillar of the Islam after the testimony of faith of the oneness of Allah SWT. As such, every *mukallaf* Muslim (who has reached the age of puberty) must perform these five-time daily prayers without any exceptions. In *tahfiz* schools, the *Tahsin* prayers program is held to help students learn the precise way in performing prayers in detail such that they will not make any mistakes. According to Othman (2011), teachers will brief every participant of the prayers program the correct manners in performing ablution before the start of the prayers program. Performing accurate ablution is important to physically and spiritually cleanse oneself that can lead to meaningful prayers. By participating in this program, *tahfiz* students can strengthen their knowledge of the accurate way of performing prayers, especially the mandatory five-time daily prayers. Surely, consistent prayers will develop and nurture strong personality among students. Moreover, the act of performing prayers can help humans to avoid committing sinful, despicable deeds.

Program *Ihya' Ramadan* (*Ramadan* Program)

The month of *Ramadhan* is one of the most revered months in the Islamic calendar, in which adult Muslims have to fast from dawn to dusk everyday throughout this month. In *Ramadan*, as mentioned in the Holy Koran, Allah SWT promises that every Muslim who performs good deeds will be amply rewarded. As such, the *Ihya' Ramadan* program, which is planned and implemented every year, aims to seek the blessings and forgiveness from Allah SWT by living a life that is in the true spirit of *Ramadan* (Jaffar Siddiq, 2010). In this program, *tahfiz* students will learn the many rewards accorded in the month of

Ramadan for performing good acts, such as mass breaking of fast, congregational mandatory prayers, congregational *terawih* prayers, and mass recitations of the Holy Koran.

The mandatory precipitations in the co-curricular activities help ensure students attain a well-balanced social development to face a more challenging life later on. The *Ihya' Ramadan* program aims to produce students who are emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and spiritually well-developed, which is in line with Malaysia's National Education Philosophy. Also, the program aims to cultivate strong brotherhood and team spirit and to nurture strong personalities, confidence, and discipline among students. As such, this program allows the school administrators to test students' physical and mental strengths, the activities of which is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 The missionary and educational activities of *Ihya' Ramadan* program

No.	Activities
1	Recitations of the Holy Koran
2	Memorizations of Koranic verses and chapters
3	Recitations of <i>Yasin</i> and remembrance of Allah SWT
4	<i>Ihya' Ramadan</i> quizzes
5	Memorization of all <i>surah</i> (chapters) of Holy Koran event
6	Breaking of fast events

Islamic scholars and teachers must their devote their missionary toward such students as the latter will eventually take over the responsibility of building and taking care of this nation in the future. According to Ab. Aziz MohdZin (1997), numerous terminologies and interpretations to explicate the exact meaning of Islamic missionary works and education. For example, the term *tarbiah* is commonly used to refer to Islamic education, learning, and the development of good manners. Despite every term having a unique meaning, all the terms or definitions used by Islamic academics and scholars are closely intertwined in terms of the main purpose of their usage (Othman Hj. Talib, 2006). Of late, social and disciplinary problems have become acute in *tahfiz* schools, entailing a new mitigating approach to overcome such a predicament. Premised in this context, the study was carried out to propose a new program for the development of *thafiz* students with strong personality and interest in missionary works by focusing on the following aspects.

***Akidah* (Faith)**

From the aspect of faith, missionary works are important to help teach the masses the concept of one god, prophets, and the hereafter, a strong understanding of which can help humans lead a religious,

harmonious life by fully submitting to Allah SWT's commands. In Islam, every Muslim is obligated to follow all the rules mentioned in the Holy Koran and prophetic sayings (Nurul Haq, at. al. 2012). From the Islamic perspective, all humans must lead a life based on the Islamic teaching as stated in the Holy Koran and prophetic sayings. Here lies the importance of *dakwah* or missionary works in guiding humans to follow the right path to attain success in this world and the hereafter (Abdul Munir, 2014). Effectively, through *dakwah*, the Muslims will become god-fearing, obedient, and steadfast in performing good deeds while abstaining from indulging in worldly, sinful acts. Enjoining people to do good deeds is one of the missionary activities that needs proper planning, which have to be carried out consistently by Islamic missionaries. In this respect, appropriate missionary works or *dakwah* can be carried out in student residences thorough various activities that can attract students to make a positive change in their lives.

***Ibadah*(Religious duties)**

From the standpoint of religious duties, *dakwah* is important to help humans understand the primary purpose of their existence in this world. As humans, we were created to fulfill two main purposes, namely to be a slave by worshipping Allah SWT and to become a vicegerent in this world (Abu Bakr al-Jabir, at. al. 1996). Premised in this context, *dakwah* centers on the effort to develop individuals with a healthy mind that can help them fully understand the concept of true worship based on the Islamic perspective. Effectively, *dakwah* enjoins people to make this world a place to gain divine attainment. According to Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1997), the primary task of a missionary is to enjoin humans to worship Allah SWT, to do good deeds, and to avoid *shirks* (an act that associates other beings with Allah SWT). Thus, anyone who directs people to a wrong path is committing a great sin, who will incur a wrath from Allah SWT. On the other hand, a person who enjoins people to a right path is said to have been given guidance by Allah SWT. Thus, able Muslims must enjoin fellow human beings to do good deeds sincerely and to rely on Allah SWT for help and guidance.

Good Manners

From the perspective of good manners, *dakwah* focuses on developing and improving the manners of individuals in a society that is facing numerous social problems. The main principle of good mannerism is to acknowledge good manners and to rebuke the bad ones (Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 2001), which is in line with the *dalil* or 'proof' mentioned in the Holy Koran and prophetic sayings. As such, students can develop good manners by engaging in learning and training activities that nurture positive moral values. In this regard, societies of all backgrounds must support efforts to help students develop good manners and reproof immoral activities. Given the gradual moral decadence in today's societies, the imperative to do *dakwah* has become more urgent to help the masses to regain good moral values or manners.

All the three aspects discussed above serve as the foundation for the enhancement of *dakwah* activities to help develop students with strong

faith, obedience, and good manners. Surely, such activities when carried out continually and consistently will be able to instill strong religious values into *tahfiz* students that can guide them to become good practicing Muslims who can contribute to the development of a society with strong moral integrity.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

In this study, the researchers attempt to analyze the effectiveness of the *dakwah* (missionary) and educational activities that have been carried out among *tahfiz* school students in science *tahfiz* schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was based on a qualitative approach carried out at the Science *Tahfiz* School in Tanah Merah, Kelantan, Peninsular Malaysia. The study sample consisted of 100 *tahfiz* students from year one to year five, whose ages ranged from 13 to 17 years. This sample was based on the random selection of 20 students from each of the five existing classes.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument was based on a survey questionnaire, which is an efficient instrument used in qualitative studies (Azizi Yahaya, 2017) to elicit information relating to respondents' perceptions, attitudes, views, and demography (Mohd Najib Abd Ghafar, 1999). Effectively, such an instrument facilitates an efficient, cost-effective data collection process (Ahmad Sunawari Long, 2014). Respondents' responses to each item of the questionnaire were rated along a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from '1' (*highly ineffective*) to '5' (*highly effective*). Such a scale can facilitate respondents to provide their opinions more systematically and reliably (Mohd Najib, 1999). The researchers used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 2.3) software to analyze the survey data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data were analyzed descriptively using the SPSS software to reveal the percentage points of respondents' responses to 10 items of the survey questionnaire along the five-point Likert-type scale, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of respondents' responses

No.	Item statement	Scale					Mean
		1 Highly ineffective	2 Ineffective	3 Not sure	4 Effective	5 Highly effective	
1.	The <i>Ihya Ramadan</i> program helps improve my	-	-	7 7%	70 70%	23 23%	4.16

	understanding of Islam through a series of lectures.						
2.	<i>Zikir</i> activities (the supplication of Allah's SWT attributes) carried out alone or in a group helps calm my feelings.	-	-	3 3%	68 68%	29 29%	4.26
3.	Koranic recitation activities help improve my ability to flawlessly recite the Holy Koran.	-	-	1 1%	58 58%	41 41%	4.4
4.	I am able to develop strong good manners through <i>usrah</i> activities with my friends and senior students.	-	-	5 5%	62 62%	33 33%	4.28
5.	<i>Qiamulail</i> (night) and <i>muhasabah</i> (self-reflection) activities help train me to rise early.	1 1%	15 15%	7 7%	55 55%	22 22%	3.82
6.	I strongly believe regular prayers to achieve specific needs help bring me closer to Allah SWT.	1 1%	1 1%	5 5%	64 64%	29 29%	4.19
7.	Religious talks held during specific events in the Islamic calendar help strengthen my faith in Islam.	-	-	4 4%	60 60%	36 36%	4.32
8.	Monthly religious activities help strengthen my knowledge of Islam.	-	-	4 4%	63 63%	33 33%	4.29
9.	I like <i>dakwah</i> (missionary) and educational activities because they help me convey the message of Islam to the society.	-	3 3%	4 4%	56 56%	37 37%	4.27

10.	Activities of <i>Kemtahsinsolat</i> (prayers camp) help me to improve my prayers.	-	1 1%	2 2%	60 60%	37 37%	4.33
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As highlighted in Table 2, virtually all items were rated high, as evidenced by their high mean scores ranging from 3.82 to 4.40, signifying that the *dakwah* activities carried out were highly effective. On closer examination, it was revealed that nine out of ten of the questionnaire items were rated highly by the respondents, made evident by mean scores ranging from 4.16 to 4.40, indicating high effectiveness of the *dakwah* (missionary) program. This finding is highly welcome as through this type of program, *tahfiz* students can learn many aspects of effective *dakwah*, including the contents of *dakwah* for specific target groups, the attributes of a good *pendakwah* (a missionary), and the appropriate missionary methodology. The findings revealed that Item 3 (*Koranic recitation activities help improve my ability to flawlessly recite the Holy Koran*) received the highest rating with a mean score of 4.4.

With 99 students (99%) indicating that they had improved their recitation ability, this program was extremely effective to train students to learn all aspects of proper Koranic recitations. Such a program can help students learn the proper intonation and stress of Koranic syllables for the beautiful, mesmerizing renditions of the Holy Koran (Din Muhammad Zakariya, 2019). According to Mohd Zaki Hamid (2009), students who want to memorize the whole chapters of the Holy Koran must first attend the *tadarus al-Quran* class or session (a recitation class in which students learn the proper pronunciation of Koranic verses) before attempting to memorize them. Typically, in this class, a *Tasmi' al-Quran* teacher (who has already memorized the whole Holy Koran) will provide students the guidance and counseling to help them learn the proper recitation technique

Likewise, Item 10 (*Activities of Kem tahsin solat or prayers camp help me to improve my prayers*) was also rated extremely high, registering a mean score of 4.33. The analysis showed 60% (n= 60) and 37% (n = 37) of the respondents agreed that the program was extremely effective and effective, respectively, indicating that a majority of students were able to improve their prayers. Equally important, such a finding will have a major implication in that those who constantly perform daily prayers with a high degree of perfection will be guided from committing sins or despicable acts (Abdul Rahman Mat Ismail, 1994). Also, such prayers can re-energize one's physical and mental strength after working for long hours (Aziz, 2011). Presumably, their previous prayers might have some imperfections. Through such a camp, they learned the proper technique of praying, prostrating, and making ablution, and others to help them to remain focused in this act of submission because as one of the five pillars of Islam, obligatory daily prayers must be performed with perfection (al-Qurtubi, 2000). Once acquiring such knowledge,

they can share all aspects of a perfect prayer with their friends and family members.

In contrast, Item 5 (*Qiamulail and muhasabah activities help train me to rise early*) received a moderate rating with a mean score of 3.82, indicating that some students had some difficulties to perform optional prayers and supplication in the middle of the night. It was found that 16 students responded negatively to this item, indicating that the *Qiamulail* (night prayers) activities had little impact on them. Thus, more efforts are needed to train these students to rise in this hour to say their prayers and to reflect on their misdeeds, as Prophet Muhammad SAW had never missed such practices throughout his blessed life (E. Suniyah, 2017). As such, many god-fearing Muslims continue this tradition of waking up in the middle of the night to offer their prayers as a means to offer their repentances, express gratitude, and get closer to Allah SWT (Abu Bakr al-Jabir, 1996). This commendable act is mentioned in the Koranic chapters of *al-Isra'* (verse 9) and *al-Muzzammil* (verses 1 – 4) when performed consistently can strengthen the human's soul (Isyah Radhiah Idris, 2004).

In this regard, Sa'id Ali's (2006) guidelines can be used to help prepare students to perform such noble deeds, such as going to bed early (e.g., before 10.00 pm), having a light dinner, reciting several short Koranic verses, setting their alarm clocks, and sleeping with a correct body posture (laying on the right side of the body). In addition, teachers must consistently provide motivation and encouragement to their students. Based on the above findings, school administrators must prioritize their efforts more on *qiamulail* activities than others.

The lack of participation in *qiamulail* activities could be attributed to students' demography, especially students' age. In this program, a majority of students were relatively young, with their ages ranging from 13 to 15 years. Such an age range may have an impact on students' participation in *dakwah* programs organized by schools (Md. Zuraini Mashrom, 2007). At these ages, *tahfiz* students have to spend most of their time on their studies. Normally, they have to attend the formal class from 7.45 am to 2.45 pm, followed by preparatory classes that end at 5.00 pm. Later, they have to attend recitation classes from 8.00 pm to 10.00 pm, in which they need to recite back Koranic verses that they had memorized and to memorize new Koranic verses. Given this tight learning schedule, it was hardly surprising that the students had to struggle to wake up in the early hours of the morning to perform prayers and supplications.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the research findings showed the *dakwah* (missionary) program was effective in improving *tahfiz* students' understanding and knowledge of Islamic obligations as a *pendakwah* (a missionary). The students highly rated all the contents of the program based on high mean scores of the questionnaire items, especially those relating to Koranic recitation, prayers, and *zikir* (supplication). These findings underscore the importance of *dakwah* programs in helping to prepare *tahfiz* students as

future leaders of Islamic missionary organizations. As demonstrated in this study, *dakwah* programs carried out in *tahfiz* schools are one of the effective means to train the future generation of Islamic missionaries, who will continue the tradition of calling humans to become good practicing Muslims who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. For this to materialize, such programs have to be well-planned, systematically organized, and coordinated with all relevant Islamic agencies or bodies.

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