

The Level of Understanding of Several Syariah-Related Issues among Flood Victims in Flood Evacuation Centres in Malaysia

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i4/21372>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i4/21372

Published Date: 12 April 2024

Abstract

Natural disasters, especially floods, are annual natural disasters that often affect Malaysia. A major concern for residents who live in flood-affected areas is the unpredictable occurrence of these floods. A temporary evacuation centre provides protection and accommodation for residents whose homes are flooded. As the number of houses inundated by flood water increases, so does the number of people who are moved to temporary evacuation centres. Previous studies have discussed the elements of unsatisfactory infrastructure facilities and the impact of a high number of flood victims in a temporary evacuation centre. The majority of flood-affected evacuees in these centres are Muslims and they are obligated to carry out Allah SWT's commandments regardless of where they are. The surrounding conditions at the evacuation centre differ from that of a home, which affect the implementation of Allah SWT's commandments in the temporary evacuation centre. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the level of understanding of several Syariah issues, such as *taharah*, performing prayers and safeguarding one's *aurat* as well as socialising, among flood victims in temporary evacuation centres in Malaysia. This study adopted a quantitative design by distributing questionnaires to 400 flood victims residing in 19 temporary evacuation centres around the Seri Medan village in Batu Pahat. Findings indicated that flood victims in temporary

evacuation centres around the Seri Medan village in Batu Pahat had a high level of understanding of Syariah issues.

Keywords: Understanding, Flood Victims, Taharah, Solat, Aurat, Temporary Evacuation Centres

Introduction

In Malaysia, floods are classified as a natural disaster based on the frequency of its occurrence almost every year as well as the negative impact it has on residents living in flood-affected areas (Fuad et al., 2023). The main factor that makes Malaysia a flood prone country with floods occurring almost every year is its geographical position between two oceans, namely the Pacific and Indian Oceans, as well as its position in the South China Sea, which exposes it to monsoon winds and heavy seasonal rainfalls (Fuad et al., 2023; Tangang et al. et al., 2012). Among the negative impacts that residents in flood-affected areas face is the destruction of property, such as damage to homes, furniture, clothing, vehicles, livestock and pets. The second is death caused by drowning, electric shock and waterborne diseases, while the third is high government expenditure for repairing the damage to public property (Gapal, 2013).

A flood disaster is defined as the overflow of water from rivers, embankments or seas that submerges low-lying areas, such as residential areas (Floods, 2015). When flood waters rise and inundate residential areas, the flood victims are moved to a temporary evacuation centre until the flood water recedes to ensure the safety of flood victims (National Weather, 2019). The Department of Social Welfare (2023) defines an evacuation centre as a building or area declared by the District Disaster Management Committee as a form of temporary accommodation for disaster victims. This building or area should be equipped with basic facilities such as rooms or partitions, clean water supply, electricity, self-cleaning facilities and a high level of user safety. However, some problems have arisen pertaining to unsatisfactory or inadequate facilities provided in the evacuation centres, such as disorganised evacuation centres, as well as incomplete and unhygienic infrastructure that continues to create dissatisfaction among evacuees in temporary evacuation centres. One crucial element of dissatisfaction is the large number of flood victims in an evacuation centre that leads to a noisy surrounding (Said et al., 2013).

An evacuation centre with unsatisfactory conditions will impact Muslim flood victims in their efforts to implement Allah SWT's commandments in their everyday lives. Subri (2016) had identified several *fiqh*-related issues faced by flood victims placed in temporary evacuation centres, such as *taharah*, safeguarding one's *aurat*, socializing and performing prayers. One main factor that led to the emergence of these issues is the weakness of the disaster management team that failed to integrate Syariah-compliant elements into the disaster management model. The integration of Syariah-compliant elements into the management framework of temporary evacuation centres includes holding Friday prayers at the evacuation centre and separating male and female flood victims by installing a separation curtain. Similarly, discussions had proposed the provision of barriers or curtains to safeguard the privacy of flood victims. Meanwhile, *taharah*-related issues included the difficulty in obtaining safe drinkable water due to the lack of a clean water supply, damaged water infrastructure and water pollution at the reservoir (Wahid et al., 2015).

Hence, determining the level of understanding regarding several Syariah-related issues among flood victims in temporary evacuation centres in Malaysia is crucial because flood

victims have voiced their concerns about Syariah-related issues they encountered while living in temporary evacuation centres.

Methodology of The Study

This is a quantitative study and the questionnaire instrument was distributed to 400 Muslim flood victims (respondents) who had experience living in temporary evacuation centres. The questionnaires were intended to collect data on the understanding of Syariah issues, such as *taharah*, performing prayers, safeguarding one's *aurat* and socializing, among flood victims in the temporary evacuation centre. According to Konting (2000), the questionnaire is used to obtain information in a study related to facts, beliefs, feelings, wishes and others.

Data from the questionnaires were then processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 29.0.0.0 software. The descriptive analysis presents the frequency and percentage aspects of respondents' feedback as well as their demographic characteristics. The main purpose of the descriptive analysis is to analyse the level of understanding of Syariah issues, such as *taharah*, performing prayers, safeguarding one's *aurat* and socialising, among flood victims in the temporary evacuation centre. The level of understanding of flood victims is based on the mean and standard deviation values.

Findings and Data Analysis

First part of the data analysis began with the demographic analysis of 400 respondents. The analysis involved six categories, namely gender, age, name and name of evacuation centre, marital status, highest education and employment sector. Descriptive data for the first category (gender), as depicted in Table 1, indicates that there were 180 (45.0%) male respondents and 220 (55.0%) female respondents.

Table 1

Respondent's Gender

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	180	45.0
Female	220	55.0
Total	400	100.0

The second category concerns the respondent's age (see Table 2). A total of 68 (17.0%) respondents were between 10-20 years old, 161 (40.3%) respondents were between 21-30 years old, 53 (13.3%) respondents were between 31-40 years old, 40 (10.0%) respondents were between 41-50 years old and 78 (19.5%) respondents were 51 years and above.

Table 2

Respondent's Age

Age	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
10-20	68	17.0
21-30	161	40.3
31-40	53	13.3
41-50	40	10.0
51 and above	78	19.5
Total	400	100.0

The third category concerns the name and location of the evacuation centre. In total there were 19 evacuation centres, with 3 (0.8%) flood victims from SMK Dato' Seth, 41 (10.3%) from Bukit Yaani School Hall, 6 (1.5 %) from SMK Tunku Putra Tongkang Pecah, 3 (0.8%) from SMK Seri Medan, 15 (3.8%) from Sekolah Agama Seri Binjai, 4 (1.0%) from Sekolah Agama Seri Medan, 1 (0.3%) from SR Seri Medan, 5 (1.3%) from SK Sejangong, 14 (3.5%) from SK Sri Permatang Rengas, 6 (1.5%) from SJKC Hua Min, 29 (7.2%) from SJKC Seri Binjai Tongkang Pecah, 2 (0.5%) from SRA Bersepadu Batu Pahat, 19 (4.8%) from Seri Medan Community Hall, 16 (4.0%) from Yong Peng Community Hall, 2 (0.5%) from Seri Medan Kindergarten, 67 (16.8%) from Balai Raya Seri Medan, 153 (38.3%) from SA Tenaga Setia, 2 (0.5%) from Sek Parit Karjan, and 12 (3.0%) from SJKC Chong Hua. These data are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3

Name of the temporary evacuation centre

Name of the PPS	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
SMK Dato' Seth	3	0.8
Dewan Sekolah Bukit Yaani	41	10.3
SMK Tunku Putra Tongkang Pecah	6	1.5
SMK Seri Medan	3	0.8

Sekolah Agama Seri Binjai	15	3.8
Sekolah Agama Seri Medan	4	1.0
SR Seri Medan	1	0.3
SK Sejangong	5	1.3
SK Sri Permatang Rengas	14	3.5
SJKC Hua Min	6	1.5
SJKC Sri Binjai Tongkang Pechah	29	7.2
SRA Bersepadu Batu Pahat	2	0.5
Dewan Orang Ramai Seri Medan	19	4.8
Dewan Orang Ramai Yong Peng	16	4.0
Tadika Kemas Seri Medan	2	0.5
Balai Raya Seri Medan	67	16.8
SA Tenaga Setia	153	38.3
Sek Parit Karjan	2	0.5
SJKC Chong Hua	12	3.0
Total	400	100.0

The fourth category concerns the respondent's marital status, which consists of 5 marital status categories. According to Table 4, 204 (51.0%) flood victims were single, 172 (43.0%) were married, 3 (0.8%) were widowers, 9 (2.3%) were widows and 12 (3.0%) were divorced.

Table 4

Respondent's marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Single	204	51.0
Married	172	43.0
Widower	3	0.8
Widow	9	2.3
Divorced	12	3.0
Total	400	100.0

The fifth category is about the respondent's level of education. Table 5 clearly indicates that 120 (30.0%) flood victims had SPM/SPMV level of education, 102 (25.5%) had a Bachelor's level of education, 82 (20.5%) had a STPM/Diploma level of education, 54 (13.5%) had a Primary School level education or no schooling at all, 30 (7.5%) had SPR/PMR level of education, 9 (2.3%) had a PhD, and 3 (0.8%) had a Master's degree.

Table 5

Respondent's level of education

Education Level	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Primary School	54	13.5
SPR/PMR	30	7.5
SPM/SPMV	120	30.0
STPM/Diploma	82	20.5
Bachelor's Degree	102	25.5
Master	3	8
PhD	9	2.3
Did not attend school	54	13.5
Total	400	100.0

The sixth and last category is about the respondent's employment status. According to Table 6, 68 (17.0%) flood victims were employed in the public sector, 161 (40.3%) were employed in the private sector, 53 (10.5%) were self-employed, 40 (10.0%) were retired and 78 (19.5%) were unemployed.

Table 6

Respondent's Occupation

Occupation	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Public sector	68	17.0
Private sector	161	40.3
Self-employed	53	13.3
Retired	40	10.0
Not employed	78	19.5
Total	400	100.0

Understanding about *Taharah*

The second part of the data analysis is related to the respondent's level of understanding of the 3 Syariah-related issues, namely *taharah*, performing prayers and safeguarding one's *aurat* and socialising, that is prevalent in the temporary evacuation centre. Descriptive data pertaining to the level of understanding for the first issue involved a test containing 5 questions, as shown in Table 7. As for Question 1, 15.8% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 23.8% 'agree' that, "flood water can be used for purification" (ablution, obligatory bathing and sanitary purposes). A mean value of 2.85 indicates that the respondents have a moderately low level of understanding of Islamic jurisprudence in this regard. As for Question 2, 42.8% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 32.3% 'agree' that, "mineral water in a small bottle (500 ml) can be used for ablution", with a mean value of 4.12 (high). Whereas for Question 3, 24.5% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 35.3% 'agree' that, "a large bottle of mineral water (1 litre) can be used for mandatory bathing", with a mean value of 3.62 (moderately high). As for Question 4, 52.0% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 33.0% 'agree' that, "alternative materials (such as tissue, cloth, leaves, dry leaves etc.) can be used for *istinjak* (sanitary purposes)", with a mean value of 4.34 (High). Whereas for Question 5, 64.8% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 23.8% 'agree' that, "*tayammum* can be performed when there is no water", with a mean value of 4.53 (High).

Table 7

Respondent's Level of Understanding Taharah

No.	Statement	STS	TS	TP	S	SS	Min	SP	Interpretation
1	Flood water can be used for purification (ablution, obligatory bathing and sanitary purposes)	119 29.8%	44 11.0%	79 19.8%	95 23.8%	63 15.8%	2.85	1.466	Moderately Low
2	Mineral water in a small bottle (500 ml) can be used for ablution	4 1.0%	17 4.3%	79 19.8%	129 32.3%	171 42.8%	4.12	.935	High
3	A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre) can be used for mandatory bathing	25 6.3%	39 9.8%	97 24.3%	141 35.3%	98 24.5%	3.62	1.140	Moderately high
4	Alternative materials (tissue, cloth, leaves, dry leaves etc.) can be used for <i>istinjak</i> (sanitary purposes)	4 1.0%	6 1.5%	47 11.8%	135 33.8%	208 52.0%	4.34	.820	High
5	Tayammum can be performed when there is no water	0 0%	0 0%	46 11.5%	95 23.8%	259 64.8%	4.53	.693	High

Understanding Solat (prayers)

Table 8 presents data concerning the performing of prayers, which is the second issue pertaining to Syariah in this study. The prayer issue contains 4 questions, whereby for

Question 1, 54.5% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 36.0% 'agree' that, "it is compulsory to perform the obligatory prayers in any place, including at the flood evacuation centre", which also had a mean value of 4.45 (high). As for Question 2, 37.5% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 35.0% 'agree' that, "congregational prayer is encouraged at flood evacuation centres", with a mean value of 4.12 (high). Whereas for Question 3, 16.8% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 35.5% 'agree' that, "Friday Prayers are optional in a flood evacuation centre", which had a mean value of 3.45 (moderately high). As for Question 4, 29.3% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 22.5% 'agree' that, "combining (*jamak*) prayers without *qasar* are allowed at flood evacuation centres", with a mean value of 3.62 (moderately high).

Table 8

Respondent's Level of Understanding

No.	Statement	STS	TS	TP	S	SS	Min	SP	Interpretation
1	It is compulsory to perform the obligatory prayers in any place, including at the flood evacuation centre	0 0%	1 .3%	37 9.3%	144 36.0%	218 54.5%	4.45	.670	High
2	Congregational prayer is encouraged at flood evacuation centres	6 1.5%	16 4.0%	87 21.7%	141 35.0%	150 37.5%	4.03	.943	High
3	Friday prayers are optional in a flood evacuation centre	26 6.5%	44 11.0%	121 30.3%	142 35.5%	67 16.8%	3.45	1.093	Moderately high
4	Combining (<i>jamak</i>) prayers without <i>qasar</i> is allowed at flood evacuation centres	29 7.2%	20 5.0%	144 36.0%	90 22.5%	117 29.3%	3.62	1.166	Moderately high

Understating of Safeguarding One's *Aurat*/Socialising

Aurat and socialising is the last Syariah-related issue in this study. Table 9 presents data pertaining to questions on the understanding of safeguarding one's *aurat* and socializing. As for Question 1, 63.7% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 27.5% 'agree' that, "concealing one's *aurat* is mandatory and must be observed in any place, including the flood evacuation

centre", with a mean value of 4.55 (high). Whereas for Question 2, 63.5% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 28.5% 'agree' that, "it is mandatory to conceal a male's *aurat*, which is the area that lies between the navel and the knees", with a mean value of 4.55 (high). As for Question 3, 62.7% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 24.8% 'agree' that, "it is mandatory to conceal a female's *aurat*, which refers to the whole body, except the face and both hands", with a high mean value of 4.50. Meanwhile, for Question 4, 59.3% of respondents 'strongly agree' and 28.5% 'agree' that, "men and women who are not *mahram* need to maintain boundaries to their socialising in the flood evacuation centre", with a mean value of 4.34 (high).

Table 9

Understanding aurat and socialising among respondents

No.	Statement	STS	TS	TP	S	SS	Min	SP	Interpretation
1	Concealing one's <i>aurat</i> is mandatory and must be observed in any place, including the flood evacuation centre	0 0%	0 0%	35 8.8%	110 27.5%	255 63.7%	4.55	.651	High
2	It is mandatory to conceal a male's <i>aurat</i> , which is the area that lies between the navel and the knees	1 .3%	1 .3%	30 7.5%	114 28.5%	254 63.5%	4.55	.666	High
3	It is mandatory to conceal a female's <i>aurat</i> , which refers to the whole body, except the face and both hands.	0 0%	1 .3%	49 12.3%	99 24.8%	251 62.7%	4.50	.715	High

4	Men and women who are not <i>mahram</i> need to maintain boundaries to their socialising in the flood evacuation centre	0 0%	0 0%	49 12.3%	114 28.5%	237 59.3%	4.47	.704	High
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Referring to the data on the flood victims' level of understanding of *taharah*, performing prayers as well as safeguarding one's *aurat* and socializing, it can be concluded that the flood victims had a high level of understanding with a mean value of 4.08.

Conclusion

The initiative to identify the level of understanding of Syariah-related issues, such as *taharah*, performing prayers and safeguarding one's *aurat* as well as socializing, among flood victims in the temporary evacuation centre is very important. Malaysia's geographical location and climate play a crucial role in flood disasters that occur in this country every year. In fact, floods have occurred more than once a year in recent times. It is important to identify the level of understanding of these issues since the majority of flood victims in the temporary evacuation centres are Muslims. Muslims are obligated to carry out Allah SWT's commandments in any situation, including in cases of flood disasters and those living in temporary evacuation centres. As explained earlier, several Islamic jurisprudence-related issues have arisen due to the fact that the flood disaster management authority had not included Syariah-compliant elements in temporary evacuation centres. Hence, when these Islamic jurisprudence-related issues emerge amongst the flood victims, it is necessary to determine their level of understanding of Syariah-related issues so that the relevant authorities can take steps to solve it. Although this study found that the understanding of Syariah had a high mean value, the existing flood victims' understanding can be streamlined by building an organized and comprehensive module.

This article contributes to the body of knowledge about flood victims' knowledge related to religion in dealing with disasters. Previous studies have stated that it is important for flood victims to have an understanding of the correct way to purify themselves so that the prayers performed are valid according to syariah. This study proves that the flood victims at the flood evacuation center have a good understanding of the issue of purification. In addition, a previous study stated that 5 obligatory prayers must be performed even if you are in a flood evacuation center. This article once again proves that prayers are still practiced even in a different situation than at home. Similarly, the issue of *aurat* remains protected and proven by this study because previous studies stated that some flood victims did not care about their *aurat* when they were at the flood evacuation center.

Acknowledgement

Part of the research findings were from a study entitled "Construction of a Spiritual Rehabilitation Module for Flood Victims Living in Temporary Evacuation Centers", which was funded by the FRGS 2021-1 Grant provided by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education (FRGS/1/2021/SSIO/UKM/02/12)

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