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Malay Undergraduates' Knowledge about the Kalima Shahadat

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Abstract

The testimony of shahadat is a basic fundamental requirement which is a mandatory for the Muslims. Thus, it is a requisite for the Muslims to clearly understand and appreciate the concept of shahadat in order to keep them away from falling into the pit of shirk. Previous studies have shown that the level of knowledge and appreciation on the concept of shahadat among the public is still at an unsatisfactory level. In fact, similar phenomenon appears to happen among the undergraduates. Hence, an assessment of the undergraduates' precise level of knowledge on the concept of shahadat needs to be carried out in order to obtain empirical results. In this study, a total of 110 undergraduates had participated in answering the questionnaire regarding the concept of shahadat. Data obtained were then run through the SPSS Statistics for statistical analysis. The findings show that the respondents' level of knowledge is generally low, although their level of interest on the knowledge of divinity is high. Hence, the researchers suggest that the authorities provide a module regarding the concept of shahadat as an effort in making the undergraduates understand the true concept of shahadat, so that their aqidah is preserved with plausible knowledge, instead of mere follow without genuine understanding of the requirement of the kalima shahadat.

Keywords: Knowledge, Two Kalima Shahadat, Malay undergraduates, Malaysian Public Institution of Higher Education

Introduction

In general, most of the Malay societies are able to pronounce the two *Kalima Shahadat* or *Syahadah al-Tauhid* and *Syahadah al-Risalah*. The first *Shahada* is the testimony that "There is no God worthy to be worshipped but Allah", whilst the second *Shahada* is the testimony that "Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of Allah". Nevertheless, there are still among them who ignore the two *kalima* and that they are being pronounced with absence of knowledge and understanding of the requirement of the two *kalima shahadah*. More astoundingly, a feature writing from a local magazine highlighted that several Malay societies were unable to pronounce the *kalima shahadah* (Massa, 2000). It is also supported by the study conducted by Jodi (2007)

that the majority of respondents among students of Tun Abdul Razak Institute of Technology (ITTAR) 73.3% did not successfully pronounce two *kalima shahadah*. In the study also found that majority of students 51.4% do not know the pillars of Islam, while the claims of shahadah are the pillars of Islam. Thus, these are symptoms of deterioration of aqidah, which is a serious problem occurring among the Muslim community in Malaysia. It is apparent that without adequate knowledge and appreciation of the requirement of shahada, one may fall into the pit of *kufr*.

In the study of Jodi (2008; 2006) also found that the low appreciation and lack understanding of the aqidah lead to the fragility of iman and cause the student into an unhealthy moral behaviour. In fact, according to Roslan (n.d.) and Abdullah (2003), a good understanding and appreciation of the aqidah enable one to avoid the problems of iman, sharia and morals. A study on the Islamic aqidah among the undergraduates of the Malaysian private institution of higher education had been conducted by Khairul (2008), whereby, the study emphasizes on the understanding of aqidah and its relation to the problem of morality. However, the study does not emphasize on the question of shahada as a concept in the Islamic aqidah. Meanwhile, other studies tend to focus on debating theoretically, such as al-'Uthaimin's (1413H), Roslan's (n.d.), and al-Qadi's (2005) study. Therefore, based on the problems and voids of the previous study, the researcher wants to develop the concept of *Syahadah al-Tauhid* and *Syahadah al-Risalah* based on the Qur'an and al-Sunah and to study the level of knowledge of undergraduate students at one of the IPTAs against *Syahadah al-Tauhid* and *Syahadah al-Risalah*.

The Concept of *Shahadat*

According to Ibn Taimiyyah (1433H), Islamic scholars agree (*ijmak*) that the principle in Islam begins with the instruction to testify that there is no god except Allah and the Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. This is a mandatory requirement to make a person from an infidel to a Muslim, an enemy to a relative, a halal of blood to the preserved blood and his property. Thus, ahl sunah wa al-jamaah has agreed on the claim of this testimony. This claim is based on the orders of the Prophet when he sent Muaz bin Jabal to Yemen as a messenger, "Verily, you are coming to a people among the people of the Book (Ahl Kitab), so call them to testify there is no God but Allah and I am the Messenger of Allah. (Al-Bukhari 1422H)" Thus, based on this hadith, obey Allah SWT and avoid shirk is mandatory and most important fard for Muslims to overcome other obligations and fard (al-Dimasyqi 2005).

When pronouncing a testimony of shahadah, one should know and understand the shahadah well so that the main purpose behind the utterance is that he believes in his heart that there is no god worshipped, but only Allah SWT alone (al-'Uthaimin 1413H). Thus, the first expression of claim is the word tawhid ie لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (laa ilaha illa Allah). This word of the tawhid has two pillars, the first is the *Nafi* which denies that there is no God who is worthy to be worshipped (لَا إِلَهَ). While the second pillar is to establish or confirm (*ithbat*) that only Allah is entitled to be worshipped (إِلَّا اللَّهُ). Hence, it is not legitimate testimony of shahadah except fulfils the two pillars in the first expression of *shahadah* (al-Hukmi 1995).

The combination of *nafi* element and *ithbat* results in a pure *tawhid* meaning compared to mere *ithbat*. For example, the following two verses say 'Ahmad is present in an extra class' and 'no one is present in that extra class except Ahmad'. The first verse is just a sign that confirms Ahmad is present but does not deny the possibility other than Ahmad, other students are also present. While the second verse includes *nafi* and *ithbat* that denies the presence of all students

except Ahmad (Abdullah, 2003). This is the concept used in the words of tawhid ie if the word tawhid is only in the form of *ithbat* that 'I worship Allah', it does not mean that he does not worship another god other than Allah or in other words, 'he may also worship another god other than Allah'. But if the word *tawhid* consists of a combination of *nafi* and *ithbat*, then it means more clearly that all gods are no one worthy to be worshipped except Allah. It also means that there is no ally in Him in his *Rububiyyah* as in creation, power, possession and so on, as well as in His *Uluhiyyah* that there is no ally for Him in the affairs of worship (al-Dimasyqi, 2005).

Kalima *tawhid* also has some conditions that need to be met. Thus, it is not legitimate to say the word *tawhid* if it does not fulfil seven conditions (Abdullah, 2003; Roslan, n. d.). Among the first conditions is knowledge. The meaning of knowledge is knowledge of the *kalima tawhid* pillars which is knowledge of *nafi* and *ithbat*. This condition as the word of Allah SWT which means, "And those whom they invoke besides Him have no power to intercede, but those who bear witness to the truth, while they have knowledge (may intercede for the believers with Allah's permission) (Az-Zukhruf: 86)." Similarly, the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Whoever dies, while he knows that no god is entitled to be worshipped But Allah, and then he entered Paradise (Muslim, 2006)."

The second condition is confident that his heart is very confident with the word *tawhid*. This is as the word of Allah SWT which means, "The believers are those who believe in God and His Messenger, then have not doubted, and have struggled with their possessions and their selves in the way of God; those -- they are the truthful ones." (al-Hujurat: 15). Similarly, the Prophet (PBUH) said, "I testify that there is no god except Allah and I am the messenger of Allah, a servant does not meet Allah if he hesitates to bring the both words of shahadah unless he entered paradise (Muslim, 2006)."

The third condition is sincerity that anyone who is not sincere because of Allah in all its practice included in the affairs of the testimony of *shahadah*, then it belongs to the people of shirk. This is as the word of Allah SWT which means, "Say, [O Muhammad], "Indeed, I have been commanded to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion." (Al-Zumar: 11). Similarly, the Prophet (PBUH) said which means, "The happiest man with my intercession on the Day of Judgment is the person who utters the word tawhid sincerely from the bottom of his heart (Ahmad, 2001)."

The fourth condition is true by carrying out the claims of the word tawhid that has been said in everyday life. While the munafiqun only pronounce them verbally but are not followed by their hearts and deeds. Thus, their expression is considered a lie because it is contradictory between the exterior and the inner. This claim is as the word of Allah SWT which means, "But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars. (al-'Ankabut: 3)." Similarly, the Prophet (PBUH) said, "No one who speaks the two words of shahadah is really from the bottom of his heart unless Allah forbids him the fire of hell (al-Bukhari, 1422H)."

The fifth condition is love which is love of Allah and the religion of Islam. On the contrary if not love Allah, he certainly does not love Islam and rejects orders of Allah SWT. This is as the word of Allah SWT which means, "O you who believe (who wish to reach Allah)! Whoever from among you turns back from his Religion, then Allah will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, (al-Maidah: 54)."

Then the sixth condition is to follow it in the heart and mind that is to practice all the instructions and leave all the prohibitions of Allah SWT. Hence, the essence of Islam is the submission and bowing heart and the body parts solely to Allah SWT. This is as the word of Allah SWT which means, "And whoever submits his face to Allah while he is a doer of good - then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold (Luqman: 22)."

Finally, the seventh requirement is to accept. This is because, some people pronounce the word tawhid and know its meaning but do not want to accept if there is someone who invites to the word. Therefore, Allah narrates in the Qur'an the attitude of the disbelievers if they are invited to the words of tawhid through His words which mean, "Indeed they, when it was said to them, "There is no deity but Allah," - were arrogant. And (they) said: "Are we going to abandon our aliha (gods) for the sake of a mad poet?" (Al-Saffat: 35-36) "

The second phrase which must be pronounced by the Muslims when pronouncing the shahadah is shahadah risalah which is confident with all the heart that Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Without this belief, one is not worthy to be called a Muslim although he believes Allah as his god (Damiriyyah, 1999). This claim is in line with the first pillar of Islam that is to say two words of shahadah which mean, "I testify that there is no God who is worthy to be worshipped except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is indeed the messenger of Allah (al-Qahtani, 2008)". The testimony of this section is not perfect if one does not meet the four conditions (Abdullah, 2003).

The first condition is to justify everything that the Prophet (PBUH) said. That is to say, Muslims who believe in the prophecy of the Prophet SAW must be convinced and justify any message or news that the Prophet (PBUH) conveyed even if the authentic news or message came to an extent logical or unreasonable in the human mind. This is because all the words of the Prophet (PBUH) are in fact the wahy of Allah as His word which means, "And he does not speak out of his own vain desire. (Al-Najm: 3). "Allowing the news brought by the Prophet without any hesitation as in his authentic Hadiths is the most fundamental to the perfection of iman. It is also reinforced by the al-Shafi'i saying, "I believe in the Messenger of Allah and what comes from the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) according to the Prophet (al-Jazairi, 2004)."

The second condition is to obey all the instructions of the Prophet. This is because it is inadequate to believe that the Prophet (PBUH) was Allah's messenger unless it was proven in the form of obedience to his teachings by performing his instructions and prohibitions. This is as Allah SWT says, "And whatever the Messenger gave you, then take it. And from whatever he forbids you, abstain from it (al-Hasyr: 7)."

The third condition is to avoid all the prohibitions of the Prophet Muhammad. This is because, in Islam there is two adherence to doing and leaving. Hence, those who are obedient to Allah and His Messenger are not limited to doing what Allah and His Messenger have commanded, but it also includes adherence if one leaves matters prohibited by Allah and His Messenger.

Finally, the fourth requirement is to worship according to the method and manner showed by the Prophet. This is because only Prophet (PBUH) is the individual who is given authority by Allah to show the worship method to Allah SWT. Among them is the Prophet (PBUH) once said about the salah and the hajj which means, "Pray as you have seen me praying (al-Bukhari 1422H)." And the hadith which means, "You must take from me the way of your hajj (Muslim 2006)." Hence, one should be fully convinced that the most appropriate and perfect way

of worship to Allah is the way of worship that is outlined by the Prophet. Therefore, one can break the *shahadah* when he is convinced that there is another way of worship that is more perfect than the way of Prophet's worship. The Prophet asserted the ban from creating something new in the affairs of religion and threatening that the practice would be rejected and not accepted by Allah SWT through his saying that, "Anyone who practices not follows as we direct, then the practice is not accepted (Muslim, 2006)."

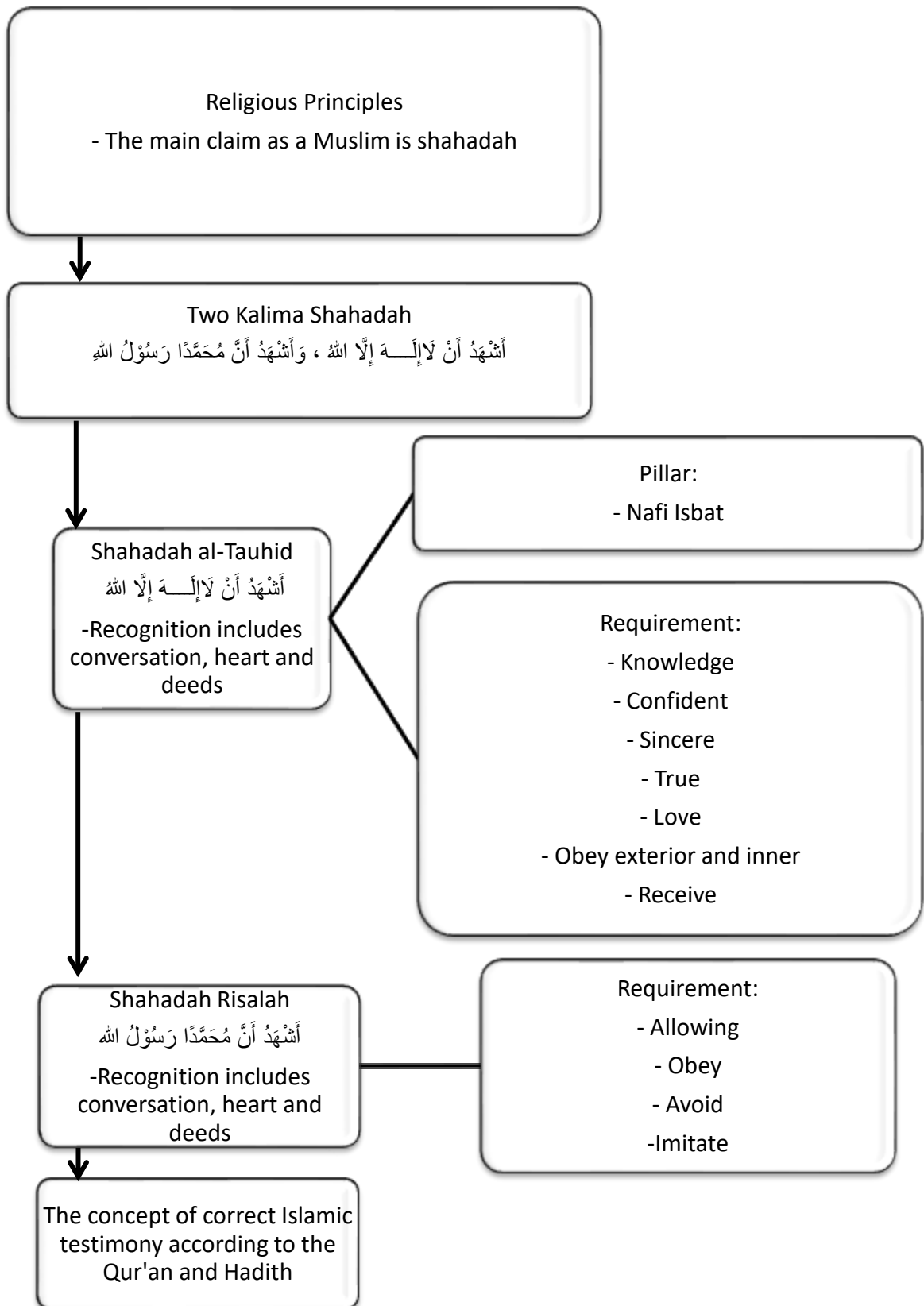


Figure 1: The concept of two kalima shahadah according to the Quran and al-Hadith

Methodology

A survey was provided to assess the undergraduates' level of knowledge on the two *Kalima Shahadat* at one of the Malaysian public institution of higher education. A total of 110 undergraduates were sampled for this study. This population was chosen in reference to Sabitha's (2006) statement that the sample size of 100 to 150 is considered as a rather large size to obtain a normal distribution for a statistical distribution. Meanwhile, undergraduates were chosen as sample due to their important position in setting example to the general public, and thus, their knowledge and understanding on the basic principles in Islam, particularly the *shahada* must be preserved. Each questionnaire takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. In this study, questionnaires were distributed to respondents, and then, collected after 15 to 20 minutes.

The self-administered questionnaire of this study is based on the study's review. The questionnaire consists of two sections, whereby, the first section contains six questions regarding the respondents' demographic, whereas the second section contains nine questions regarding aspect of knowledge about the concept of two *kalima shahadat*.

The reliability of the questionnaire on the concept of two *kalima shahadat* was determined with a pre-study of 30 undergraduates. Using the Cronbach Alpha test, the coefficient reliability test is 0.74 (Santos, 1999).

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) has been used for the analysis of this study. The mean and percentage of answers in each category were calculated and presented in the form of statements. Independent-samples t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) (95.0% confidence interval) were used to compare selected test parameters, such as gender, age, education level, listening to and reading of religious materials, and others.

Results and Discussion

Of the total of 110 respondents involved in this study, 70.9 percent were females and 29.1 percent were males. A majority of the respondents were from the field of management (33.6%), followed by the field of literature (28.2%), translation (10.0%), biology (6.4%), geography (3.6%), and others (9.0%). A majority of the respondents were of 21 years of age (49.1%). In terms of secondary school education, a majority of the respondents received secondary education at SMK schools (88.2%), whereas 4.5 percent of the respondents received secondary education at religious schools of SMKA. A highly significant number of the respondents were interested in the knowledge of divinity (97.3%). Likewise, a significant number of the respondents were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality (72.7%).

Regarding the question on the two *kalima shahadat* as one of the pillar of faith, a majority of the respondents from the sciences field (i.e. biology, physics, social sciences, computer science, environmental technology) had strongly disagreed with it (30.4%) on the scale of 1. Meanwhile, a majority of the respondents from the arts field (i.e. economics, geography, Islamic finance, communication, Islamic studies, management, literature, translation) had strongly agreed with it (35.6%) on the scale of 5. Respondents from the sciences field had answered this question correctly because the two *kalima shahadat* is a pillar of Islam and not a pillar of faith as stated by al-Qahtani (2008). Respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity had mostly answered "yes" on this question (33.6%) on the scale of 5, whilst respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality had mostly answered "no" on this

question (43.3%) on the scale of 1. The findings show that respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality tend to have better knowledge on the two *kalima shahadat* compared to respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity. The average of respondents who answered that the two *kalima shahadat* is a pillar of faith is 2.96 with a std. deviation of 1.713. This shows that the respondents have poor knowledge on this matter.

On the question of the meaning of *kalima tauhid*, a majority of the respondents from both sciences (73.9%) and arts (60.9%) field had answered that they have strong knowledge on it. Perhaps this is because the mass media had often highlighted the meaning of the *kalima tauhid*, particularly during *adhan* (Islamic call to worship). A majority of the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity (64.5%) and the Prophet SAW's personality (63.8%) had answered "yes" on the scale of 5. The findings show that both groups of respondents have a very fine knowledge on this matter. The average for the question of the knowledge on the meaning of *kalima tauhid* is 4.55 with a std. deviation of 0.725. This shows that the respondents have fine knowledge on this matter.

On the question of knowledge of the *kalima tauhid* pillars, 43.5 percent of the respondents from the sciences field and 32.3 percent of the respondents from the arts field had answered "quite agree" on the scale of 3. This findings show that the respondents from both field have moderate knowledge on this matter. Meanwhile, 66.7 percent of the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity and 40.0 percent of the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality had answered "no" on the scale of 3. The findings show that respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality tend to have better knowledge on the *kalima tauhid* pillars compared to respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity. The average for the question of the knowledge on the pillars of *kalima tauhid* is 3.35 with a std. deviation of 1.096. This shows that the respondents have moderate knowledge on this matter.

On the question of the number of pillars in *kalima tauhid*, 43.5 percent of the respondents from the sciences field and 57.5 percent of the respondents from the arts field had answered "quite agree" on the scale of 3. This findings show that a majority of the respondents have poor knowledge on this matter. This is because the *kalima tauhid* has of two pillars as stated by al-Hukmi (1995) instead of four pillars. A majority of the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity had answered "no" (100.0%) on the scale of 3. The finding shows that these respondents have moderate knowledge on this matter. Meanwhile, 55.0 percent of the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality had answered "no" on the scale of 3. This finding shows that these respondents have poor knowledge on this matter. The average for the question of knowledge on the pillars of *kalima tauhid* is 2.90 with a std. deviation of 0.898. This shows that the respondents have poor knowledge on this matter.

On the question of knowledge of the conditions of *kalima tauhid*, 65.2 percent of the respondents from the sciences field and 46.0 percent of the respondents from the arts field had answered "quite agree" on the scale of 3. The findings indicate that a majority of the respondents have moderate knowledge on the existence of conditions of *kalima tauhid* as stated by Abdullah Yasin (2003). A majority of the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity had answered "no" (66.7%) on the scale of 3. The finding shows that these respondents have poor

knowledge on this matter. Meanwhile, the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality had answered "yes" (51.3%) on the scale of 3. The finding shows that these respondents have moderate knowledge on this matter. The average for the question of knowledge on the conditions of *kalima tauhid* is 2.98 with a std. deviation of 0.835. This shows that the respondents have moderate knowledge on this matter.

On the question of the number of conditions of *kalima tauhid*, 56.5 percent of the respondents from the sciences field and 43.7 percent of the respondents from the arts field had answered "quite agree" on the scale of 3. The findings indicate that a majority of the respondents have poor knowledge on this matter. This is because there are seven conditions of the *kalima tauhid* as stated by Roslan (n.d.) instead of ten conditions. Respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity had answered "yes" (46.7%) on the scale of 3. The finding indicates that these respondents have poor knowledge on this matter. Meanwhile, respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality had answered "yes" (50.0% scale 3) and "no" (50.0% scale 2) equally. The findings indicate that these respondents have moderate knowledge on this matter. The average for the question of the knowledge on the conditions of *kalima tauhid* is 2.70 with a std. deviation of 0.914. This shows that the respondents have poor knowledge on this matter.

On the question of the *syahadah risalah* pronouncement, 52.2 percent of the respondents from both sciences and arts field had answered that they strongly understand its meaning. The findings indicate that the respondents from both fields have very fine knowledge on the meaning of *syahadah risalah*. Perhaps this is because the mass media had often highlighted the meaning of *syahadah risalah*, particularly during *adhan*. Meanwhile, 66.7 percent (scale 4) of the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity and 63.3 percent (scale 5) of the the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality had answered "no". The findings indicate that the respondents have poor knowledge on this matter. The average for the question of knowledge on the *syahadah risalah* pronouncement is 4.38 with a std. deviation of 0.857. This shows that the respondents have fine knowledge on the meaning of the *syahadah risalah* pronouncement.

On the question of knowledge on the conditions of *syahadah risalah*, the respondents from both sciences (56.5%) and arts (42.5%) field had answered "quite agree". The findings show that a majority of the respondents have moderate knowledge about the existence of conditions of the *syahadah risalah* as stated by Abdullah Yasin (2003). A majority of the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity had answered "no" (66.7%) on the scale of 3. The finding indicates that these respondents have poor knowledge on this matter. Meanwhile, the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW's personality had answered "yes" (47.5%) on the scale of 3. The finding indicates that these respondents have moderate knowledge on this matter. The average for the question of the conditions of *syahadah risalah* is 2.96 with a std. deviation of 0.995. This shows that the respondents have moderate knowledge on this matter.

On the question of the number of conditions of the *syahadah risalah*, the respondents from both sciences (43.5%) and arts (49.4%) field had answered "quite agree". The findings indicate that the respondents from both fields have poor knowledge on this matter. This is because the *syahadah risalah* has four conditions as stated by Abdullah Yasin (2003) instead of seven conditions. A majority of the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of divinity

had answered “no” (66.7%) on the scale of 3. The finding indicates that these respondents have moderate knowledge on this matter. Meanwhile, the respondents who were interested in the knowledge of the Prophet SAW’s personality had answered “yes” (53.8%) on the scale of 3. The finding indicates that these respondents have poor knowledge on this matter. The average for the question of the conditions of *syahadah risalah* is 2.70 with a std. deviation of 0.873. This shows that the respondents have poor knowledge on this matter.

Conclusion

The two words of shahadah are the most important demands that Muslims must take to overcome other obligations and fard. The claim is inadequate to say the word of the shahadah, but it must be accompanied by a number of pillars and conditions that must be understood and fulfilled so that the claims of shahadah can be implemented perfectly. This is because the shahadah is the legal determinant of being a Muslim. In this study, the researcher has succeeded in forming a concept of al-Tauhid and al-Risalah according to al-Quran and al-Sunah based on the understanding of the Islamic scholars (ulama). Therefore, the researcher proposes that the concept of shahada must be understood and felt with heart by the Muslims so that the interpretation of the shahada is more meaningful in accordance with the will of Allah SWT.

It can be concluded from the study that the level of knowledge of the undergraduates at the selected Malaysian public institution of higher education regarding the two *kalima shahadat* is low since the analyses have shown that four of the questions were answered by the respondents with a poor knowledge. The average of questions answered by the respondents with a moderate knowledge is three, whilst the average of questions answered by the respondents with a fine knowledge is two. Although a majority of the respondents expressed their interest in the knowledge of divinity, efforts towards that are still lacking – seemingly in terms of earnest. Therefore, the researchers suggest that this basic debate in Islam is given due attention by the undergraduates and that responsible bodies are to take action on this matter (i.e. distributing module or brochures regarding the concept of *shahada*) so that the Islamic *aqidah* can be maintained, thereby, the Muslims’ *aqidah* can be preserved.

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