

Malaysian News Report on Muslim Converts' Issues: A Study on *Malaysiakini**

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Abstract

Issues involving the Muslim converts are numerous and complex. Among them are the challenges of understanding Islam as a religion, welfare and psychological pressure from their family, foster family and society as well as psychological pressure to adapt to the new religion (M.Y. Jaafar, 1991, p. 55-56; Lokman Ab. Rahman, 1995, p. 62-66; Nur A'thiroh Masyaa'il Tan Abdullah & Fariza Md. Sham, 2009, p. 84). However, this study focuses on issues concerning the Muslim converts which were published in a Malaysian on-line newspaper. This study reports the findings of content analysis in the quantitative and qualitative aspects where news report and the way of news reporting on Muslim converts' issues were explored in a selected Malaysian newspaper. Newspaper articles on the issues regarding Muslim converts which were published in Malaysiakini from 2007 to 2011 were compiled and analyzed based on a coding protocol (in terms of the category of Muslim converts' issues and tone of articles' headlines). Those newspaper articles were analyzed to evaluate the news category of Muslim converts' issues that have been identified and propose a more effective form of preaching mechanism in dealing with Muslim converts' issues in Malaysia. Results showed a high statistical fact on positively-toned headlines of articles on Muslim converts in Malaysiakini within the five-year period. Thus, the study concluded that Malaysiakini did perform the mentor role of transmitting appropriate information to its readers. Moreover, the Malaysian government and Islamic religious bodies should also play their roles in addressing issues on Muslim converts accordingly.

Keywords: Malaysian news reports; Muslim converts; *Malaysiakini*; content analysis

Introduction

The conversions to Islam among non-Muslims are generally seen as good news by the Muslims. However, looking at it at a bigger picture, issues involving the Muslim converts are actually various and complex. This is because the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam itself is full of challenges and obstacles as Allah, the Almighty God says in the al-Qur'an, Surah al-Ankabut [29]: 1-3:

Translation: 1. *AlifLâmMîm* [These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'ân, and none but Allâh (Alone) knows their meanings]. 2. Do people think that they will be left alone because they say: "We believe," and will not be tested. 3. And We indeed tested those who were before them. And Allâh will certainly make (it) known (the truth of) those who are true, and will certainly make (it) known (the falsehood of) those who are liars, (although Allâh knows all that before putting them to test).

Islam newly-converts often face the psychological dilemma which requires a great deal of attention, understanding and support from the society (Nur A'thiroh Masyaa'il Tan Abdullah & Fariza Md. Sham, 2009, p. 83). Psychological challenges faced by the new Muslim brothers and sisters are such as the challenge of understanding Islam as a religion, psychological pressure from their family, foster family and society as well as psychological pressure to adapt to the new religion (M.Y. Jaafar, 1991, p. 55-56; Lokman Ab. Rahman, 1995, p. 62-66; Nur A'thiroh Masyaa'il Tan Abdullah & Fariza Md. Sham, 2009, p. 84).

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