

The Internalization of *Akhlaq* among Selangor Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The internalization of *akhlaq* is vital as it serves as a stronghold that preserves one's belief, values, faith and culture. This will make one not only knowledgeable but also practices his belief in all aspects of his life. The question is whether or not today's education is internalizing *akhlaq* among the students? This paper discusses the findings of a study on the internalization of *akhlaq* among secondary school students in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. This quantitative study involved 715 form four Muslim students aged 16 years old from 10 secondary schools in Selangor. A questionnaire was employed in collecting the data. It consisted of three constructs to measure the internalization of *akhlaq*, i.e. *akhlaq* towards Allah, the Prophet, and the Qur'an. The findings showed that the respondents could be classified into two levels of internalization of *akhlaq*, i.e. high level and moderate. The high internalization of *akhlaq* was towards Allah; while the moderate internalization of *akhlaq* was towards The Prophet, and the Quran. However, the overall findings showed a moderate level of internalization of *akhlaq* among the respondents. The finding also showed significant differences in the internalization of *akhlaq* based on gender and school location.

Keywords: internalization of *akhlaq*, students, Malaysian schools

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of immorality among youngsters nowadays has been a major concern in the Malaysian society. The most frightening fact exposed by both printed and electronic media is the continuing increasing number of youths involved in social misconducts. In addition, the crime rate among them has also increased. This situation reflects the seriousness of this problem and the need to respond appropriately to prevent this problem from spreading further in the society.

The increasing number of students involved in immorality has raised questions of the internalization of *akhlaq* among adolescents. Although various rules and regulations have been set by the school, students' misconducts keep increasing. Among the obvious problems is related to deviant and delinquent behaviour among teenagers. According to the press, the number of reported cases has increased from time to time regardless of the area where students come from.

Thus, according to Siddiq Fadhil (1995), we should pay attention to these moral issues because it will be affecting the community and the rise and fall of a civilization. In fact, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammed stressed that excellence in this world and the hereafter will not be fully achieved as long as one's *akhlaq* is not guided by the teachings of the Quran. According to him, immorality among the younger generation today is largely due to lack of understanding of Islam (Berita Harian, December 2, 1996). From this statement, it is clear that the rejection and lack of appreciation towards the Islamic way of life will lead to immorality, thus destroying human needs in general.

Meanwhile, Wan Mohd. Nor (1991) believes that morality is widely and increasingly declining because students do not understand and appreciate a clear philosophy of education. Students perceive that education is just a medium to acquire the information and skills to meet the requirements of the employer when they go into the job market or workforce. They put aside the question of morality and spirituality and assume that both are things that have nothing to do with the skills and information needed. While in reality, the development of the community,

nation and the world is very much affected by individuals' personal qualities apart from their skills and academic excellence. Therefore, proper religious understanding and internalization of *akhlaq* among young adults must be one of the important strategies in maintaining and enhancing the integrity of *akhlaq* in all communities in general and specifically in Muslim community (Azhar Ahmad 2006; Harery 2007).

2. Objectives

The objective of this study is to:

- 1) Identify the level of internalization of *akhlaq* towards; Allah, The Prophet, and the Qur'an among the secondary school students in Selangor.
- 2) Identify the overall level of internalization of *akhlaq* among secondary school students in Selangor.
- 3) Identify the differences of internalization of *akhlaq* based on gender, and school location.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a survey research design. According to Ary et al. (2006), surveys can be used to measure opinions, attitudes and behaviours. Kerlinger (1986) also added that if the goal of a study is to examine the influence of independent variables to the dependent variables, thus a survey method is the most appropriate method. In this research, the survey method was used to obtain quantitative data concerning the students' background and their views on the internalization of *akhlaq*.

3.2 Research Sample

This study involved a total of 715 Muslim students aged 16 as the respondents; selected through stratified random and clustered sampling. Stratified random sampling was employed because the number of students is not homogeneous in each district, then the appropriate method is to use stratified random sampling (Mohd Majid, 1998). Stratified random sampling also can be used to ensure that every student in every district has the same chance of being selected as sample (Piaw, 2006; Ary et al., 2006 and Bryman, 2001). Thus, in this study the researcher divided the schools in the state of Selangor into 10 districts as proposed by the Selangor Education Department ie. Klang, Kuala Langat, Kuala Selangor, Hulu Langat, Hulu Selangor, Sabak Bernam, Gombak, Petaling Perdana, Petaling Utama and Sepang. In each of the district, a secondary school was randomly selected as the location of the study.

3.3 Research Instruments

A questionnaire was employed in collecting the data. The questionnaire was developed by adopting and adapting questionnaires used by Azma Mahmood (2006), Azhar Ahmad (2006) and Harery Abu Saad (2007). It consists of three constructs to measure the internalization of *akhlaq*, i.e. *akhlaq* towards: Allah, the Prophet, and the Qur'an based on the category of *akhlaq* proposed by Jalaluddin and Usman Said (1994). This study used students' self-reporting approach to collect data on the internalization of *akhlaq* among the respondents. There are 47 items in this section and questions are built on a four-point Likert scale in the positive and negative forms of expression. Each item has a set of responses that indicates the level of frequency related to the act of a moral statement (Never, Rarely, Often and Very Often).

4. Findings

4.1 Respondent' Background

Table 1 shows that the number of male respondents involved in this study was 290 (40.6%), students while the number of female respondents was 425 (59.4%). The findings also show that 335 (46.9%) respondents were studying at secondary schools in cities, while 380 (53.1%) students were studying in rural secondary schools.

Table 1. Respondents' background

	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	290	40.6
Female	425	59.4
School Location		
City	335	46.9
Rural	380	53.1
Total	715	100

4.2 The Internalization of Akhlaq towards Allah

Table 2 below illustrates findings on the internalization of *akhlaq* towards Allah. Negative items (*) have been identified prior to the analysis as items that would gather students' true notion or understanding of the level of internalization of *akhlaq* towards Allah. The findings showed that of the total 21 items, 11 items were at a high level of internalization, while the remaining 10 items were moderate. The items are sequenced by the highest to the lowest mean values.

The mean values of the items beginning with the highest score was (I fear the wrath of Allah and the Hereafter) with a mean of 3.69, followed by 3.62 (I believe the power of God by praying to Him), 3.61 (set aside the religion of Islam to personal interests), 3.42 (to perform ritual prayers), 3.39 (appeal for the help of Allah), 3.38 (disobeys the teachings of Islam), 3.31 (thinking about life after death), 3.27 (grateful to all of nikmat), 3.25 (to abate qadha and qadar), 3.24 (take for granted all the good deeds) and 3.14 (seek the favour of Allah).

Meanwhile the remaining 10 items for internalization were of moderate level mean score: complaining when faced with a misfortune (2.98), praying at all times (2.97), keeping all the blessings (2.93), worshiping in obedience to Allah (2.87), committing every act because of Allah (2.86), fear of committing sin (2.84), tolerate distress (2.82), prevent evil within their means (2.68), prioritize the command of Allah (2.69) and obey Allah (mean 2:59) .

Table 2. *Akhlaq* towards Allah

Item	<i>f</i>	N=715				Mean	SD	Level
		N	R	O	VO			
1	I fear the wrath of Allah	11	24	141	539	3.69	0.61	H
2	believe the power of God	2	37	192	484	3.62	0.60	H
3*	set aside the religion of Islam to personal interests	7	23	213	472	3.61	0.60	H
4*	perform ritual prayers	15	57	253	390	3.42	0.73	H
5	appeal for the help of Allah	3	78	273	361	3.39	0.69	H
6*	disobeys the teachings of Islam	10	57	300	348	3.38	0.69	H
7	thinking about life after death	5	110	257	343	3.31	0.75	H
8	grateful to all of <i>nikmat</i>	5	86	333	291	3.27	0.69	H
9	to abate <i>qadha</i> and <i>qadar</i>	4	105	311	295	3.25	0.72	H
10*	take for granted all the good deeds	10	70	377	258	3.24	0.68	H
11	seek the favour of Allah	2	123	360	230	3.14	0.70	H
12*	complaining when faced with a misfortune	17	86	506	106	2.98	0.60	M
13	praying at all times	13	214	273	215	2.97	0.82	M
14	keeping all the blessings	5	191	369	150	2.93	0.71	M
15	worshiping in obedience to Allah	14	249	26	184	2.87	0.82	M
16	committing every act because of Allah	10	243	300	162	2.86	0.78	M
17	fear of committing sin	18	252	275	170	2.84	0.82	M
18	tolerate distress	4	245	344	122	2.82	0.71	M
19	prevent evil within their means	23	274	329	89	2.68	0.73	M
20	prioritize the command of Allah	14	328	290	83	2.69	0.71	M
21	obey Allah	6	343	305	61	2.59	0.64	M

* Item in negative form

H= high, M=Moderate, L=Low

4.3 The Internalization of *Akhlaq* towards Rasul

The data analysis in Table 3 shows that only two items were high level internalization which are 'I wholeheartedly believe in the Prophet Muhammad's prophecy' with a mean value of 3.66 and 'I believe that truth is conveyed by the teachings of the Prophet' with a mean value of 3.58.

Meanwhile, 13 items with moderate mean score level of internalization of *akhlaq* towards the prophet were : 'I love Rasulullah more than my love to others' (2.97), followed by 'I say a prayer for the Prophet Muhammad, each time his name is heard' (2.91), 'I say a prayer for the Prophet Muhammad, S. A. W. '(2.88), 'I am obedient to the teachings contained in the Quran and al-Sunnah '(2.71), 'I stay away from all that are prohibited by the Prophet S. A. W. as a sign of obedience to him '(2.69), ' I obey the prophet by abiding to his teachings (2.65), 'I earnestly follow the practice of the Prophet (2.63), ' I focus on matters presented in a ceremony of knowledge '(2.60), 'I follow the prophet on the conduct of everyday life '(2:42), ' I attended a science or religion talks on my own initiative '(2.31), 'I perform the prayers as taught by the Prophet consistently' (2:24), 'I emulate the Prophet's *akhlaq* in my daily interactions "(2:24) and ' I call on friends to convey the teachings of Islam together '(2.15).

The overall analysis indicates that the students actually believe in Muhammad's prophethood and the truth in the teachings conveyed by the Prophet. However, the moderate mean scores show that the students do not performed the daily practices conveyed by the Prophet such his character, practices and perform *dakwah* to friends.

Table 3. *Akhlaq* towards Rasulallah

Item	<i>f</i>		N=715		Mean	SD	Level
	N	R	O	VO			
1 Believe in the Prophet 'prophecy'	7	47	131	530	3.66	0.65	H
2 Believe that truth is conveyed by the teachings of the Prophet	6	48	193	470	3.58	0.65	H
3 Love The prophet more than love to others	22	203	266	224	2.97	0.85	M
4 Say a prayer for the Prophet, each time his name is heard	25	249	207	234	2.91	0.90	M
5 Say a prayer for the Prophet Muhammad	4	229	333	149	2.88	0.73	M
6 Obedient to the teachings contained in the Quran and al-Sunnah	6	301	304	104	2.71	0.72	M
7 Stay away from all that are prohibited by the Prophet as a sign of obedience to him	17	274	338	86	2.69	0.71	M
8 Obey the prophet by abiding to his teachings	7	314	319	75	2.65	0.68	M
9 Follow the practice of the Prophet	15	319	298	83	2.63	0.71	M
10 Focus on matters presented in a ceremony of knowledge	11	337	293	74	2.60	0.69	M
11 Follow the prophet on the conduct of everyday life	16	419	243	37	2.42	0.63	M
12 Attended a science or religion talks on own initiative	64	424	171	56	2.31	0.74	M
13 Perform the prayers as taught by the Prophet consistently	55	472	151	37	2.24	0.66	M
14 Emulate the Prophet's akhlaq in daily interactions	20	527	147	21	2.24	0.54	M
15 Call on friends to convey the teachings of Islam together	14	249	268	184	2.15	0.76	M

4.4 The Internalization of *Akhlaq* towards the *Quran*

Table 4 below shows the analysis to answer questions on the internalization of *akhlaq* towards the *Quran*. The study shows that out of 11 items, five items have a high level of internalization with a mean score value exceeding 3.00. While the other six items have moderate mean score level.

Table 4. *Akhlaq* towards the Quran

Item	<i>f</i>				Mean	SD	Level
	N	R	O	VO			
1 Starting with Basmalah	7	79	171	458	3.51	0.73	H
2 Pay attention to the dress code	5	64	232	414	3.48	0.69	H
3 Perform the ablution before reading the verses	13	144	235	323	3.21	0.83	H
4* Only read the Quran, when asked by parents	33	64	340	278	3.21	0.79	H
5* Recite the Quran aloud to be heard by others	40	88	310	277	3.15	0.84	H
6 Try to read the Qur'an according to tajwid	23	196	312	184	2.92	0.81	M
7 Keep quiet to pay attention to the recitation by friends	19	303	314	79	2.63	0.71	M
8 Always moved to read the Qur'an	22	365	228	100	2.57	0.77	M
9 Recite a du'a after reading the Quran	73	304	203	135	2.56	0.91	M
10 Try to understand every verse of the Quran by referring to the translation of the verse	60	386	176	93	2.42	0.82	M
11 Refer to the Quran as a reference and guidance for daily conducts	42	417	205	51	2.37	0.70	M

The items that showed a high mean score level of internalization are; 'reading the Quran with the right method (starting with a'uzubillah and Bismillah)' (3.51), 'I pay attention to the dress code when reciting the Qur'an' (3.48), 'I perform the ablution before reading the verses of the Qur'an' (3.21), 'I only read the Quran, when asked by my parents' (3.21) and 'I recite the Quran aloud to be heard by others *' (3.15).

Meanwhile, the items, which had moderate mean score level of internalization are; 'I try to read the Qur'an according to correct pronunciation' (2.92), 'I keep quiet to pay attention to the recitation of the Quran by friends' (2.63), 'I am always moved to read the Qur'an' (2.57), 'I recite a du'a after reading the Quran' (2.56), 'I try to understand every verse of the Quran by referring to the translation of the verse' (2.42) 'I refer to the Quran as a reference and guidance for daily conducts' (2.37).

4.5 The Internalization of *Akhlaq* among Students

Table 5 below shows the overall findings on the internalization of *akhlaq* among students in Selangor. The study showed that out of the three constructs related to the internalization of *akhlaq*, only one construct had its mean that reached the high level of internalization, which is *akhlaq* towards Allah (mean 3.12). Meanwhile, the other two constructs i.e *akhlaq* towards the Qur'an (mean 2.91), and *akhlaq* towards the Prophet (mean 2.71) were moderate. The overall mean of the internalization of *akhlaq* of the secondary school students in Selangor are moderate with a mean score of 2.91.

Table 5. Overall finding

Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Allah	3.12	0.36	High
al-Quran	2.91	0.37	Moderate
The Prophet	2.71	0.40	Moderate
Overall	2.91	0.36	Moderate

4.6 Gender and School Location Differences in the Internalization of *Akhlaq*

Table 6 below shows gender differences in the internalization of *akhlaq* among the respondents.

Table 6. Gender differences in the internalization of Akhlaq

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig
Allah	Male	290	3.03	.34	-5.677	.000
	Female	425	3.18	.36		
The Prophet	Male	290	2.67	.39	-2.248	.025
	Female	425	2.73	.41		
Al-Quran	Male	290	2.84	.34	-4.654	.000
	Female	425	2.96	.38		

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the internalization of *akhlaq* i.e. *akhlaq* towards Allah, the Prophet, and the Qur'an based on gender. Findings showed that there was a significant difference in the scores of *akhlaq* towards Allah for male (M=3.03, SD=0.34) and female (M=3.18, SD=0.36), $t = -5.677$, $p = 0.000$. Finding on *akhlaq* towards the Prophet showed a significant difference in the scores for male (M=2.67, SD=0.39) and female (M=2.73, SD=0.41), $t = -2.248$, $p = 0.025$. Moreover, finding on *akhlaq* towards al-Quran also showed a significant difference in the scores for male (M=2.84 SD=0.34) and female (M=2.96, SD=0.38), $t = -4.654$, $p = 0.005$. These results suggest that female students had better internalization of *akhlaq* than the male students had.

Table 7. School location differences in the internalization of Akhlaq

	School Location	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig
Allah	City	335	3.08	.35	-2.008	.045
	Rural	380	3.14	.35		
The Prophet	City	335	2.65	.40	-3.097	.002
	Rural	380	2.75	.40		
Al-Quran	City	335	2.87	.35	-2.433	.015
	Rural	380	2.94	.37		

Table 7 shows an independent-sample t-test conducted to compare the internalization of *akhlaq* based on school location. Findings showed there was a significant difference in the scores of *akhlaq* towards Allah for students in the city (M=3.08, SD=0.35) and rural (M=3.14, SD=0.35), $t = -2.008$, $p = 0.045$. Finding on *akhlaq* towards the Prophet showed a significant difference in the scores for city (M=2.65, SD=0.40) and rural (M=2.75, SD=0.40), $t = -3.097$, $p = 0.002$. Finding on *akhlaq* towards al-Quran also showed a significant difference in the scores for city (M=2.87 SD=0.35) and rural (M=2.94, SD=0.37), $t = -2.433$, $p = 0.015$. These results suggest that students, which their school located in the rural, had better internalization of *akhlaq* compare the students in the city had.

5. Discussion

Based on the calculation of the mean scores of the instrument, the samples should be categorized into three groups of internalization: low, moderate and high level. However, there were only two groups identified in this study, namely students with the high and moderate level of internalization of *akhlaq*. There were no samples that had low level of internalization of *akhlaq*. Only one construct had a high level of internalization i.e *akhlaq* towards Allah while the other two constructs; *akhlaq* towards al-Quran and The Prophet had a moderate level. The overall findings showed that the secondary school students in Selangor are moderate in their internalization of *akhlaq*. The finding also showed female students had internalized the *akhlaq* more than male students had. This finding is in line with the findings of Azhar Ahmad (2006) and Sarimah et al. (2011). It was also found that rural students had better internalization of *akhlaq* compared to urban students had.

This finding conforms to the findings of the study conducted by the Ab. Halim and Khadijah (2003) and Mohd Shukri (2005) which showed that students believe learning Islamic moral values through Islamic Education is not just for examination and certification purposes. More importantly, they are also confident that the values are very beneficial and can be practiced in their daily life. Moreover, the Islamic Education teachers involved in the study by Ab. Halim (2007) also viewed that the school activities, religious activities and school rules have a positive

impact and a significant contribution to the development of *akhlaq* among the students.

The Islamic Education Philosophy is an integrated and holistic philosophy that emphasizes and aims to gain an internalization of *akhlaq* in one's daily life. This goal was achieved as the findings of this study shows that students' had a high and moderate level of internalization. The item analysis for each construct also showed a higher mean score obtained in embracing the matters related to faith such as confidence in the authority of God and Prophecy. These findings indicate the students' high level of internalization of the fundamentals of Islamic faith which the students have learned either through informal or formal education. This finding is consistent with the findings by the Ab. Halim and Zarin's (2002) study in which majority of the respondents (70.3%) of the study defined and associated the characteristics of one with *akhlaq* with the aspects of unity *Uluhiyyah* and related to God and moral characteristics of *mahmudah* (commendable).

However, in practice, it is found that there were several aspects that had moderate mean scores such as consistency in performing prayers and emulating the Prophet's morale. This conforms to the findings of a study that found that the overall appreciation of personal morality among secondary school students in Sarawak is moderate (Azhar, 2006). However, the study also found that a relatively low pattern of appreciation of some critical behaviours among secondary school students, such as the duty in performing the five daily prayers, social manners and *aurat*. Another study by Ahmad Diniyah (1995) also showed similar findings in relation to practices that are not obligatory (*sunat*) and preventing disobedience. The views and findings of the present study are consistent with these findings. Secondary school students seem to believe in the six pillars of faith but do not they bring forth in practice and behaviour.

The Integrated Islamic Education Curriculum for Secondary School Philosophy is founded on the unity of God doctrine that recognizes God as the Creator and that the message of Islam is a message on morality or *akhlaq*, which aims to create a generation who can live the life that can benefits others and the surroundings. Man is God's best creation and therefore should be devoted to God based on piety and his role as a caliph who has been entrusted to administer and manage God's creations. Man's perfection is not just his intellectuality alone. He should have knowledge, firm faith, and internalizes and practices the teachings of Islam and presents noble Islamic conducts.

The Ministry of Education's initiatives to strengthen the formation of moral values in students through *Akhlaq and Adab Islamiyyah* (AAI) in Islamic Education. It is hoped that through the teaching components of AAI, students could be developed to be capable of self-control that could retaliate them from negative influences. The teaching of morality in schools should emphasize on true understanding and internalization and not on cognitive aspects only. This is because, character building of a student depends more on the education received (Mat Zain and Mazlan, 1989). Insufficient religious education and student dissatisfaction have been identified as factors that resulted in poor character development among students. Individuals who are equipped with knowledge and moral integrity will contribute to the development and progress of the community and nation. Thus, in order to develop the country and improve the lives of the people, appreciation and moral integrity should be placed as a precondition for achieving sustainable development. As described by Tajul Ariffin and Nor 'Aini (2002), internalization of *akhlaq* in Islam is not just theoretical knowledge, but requires the norms of implementation and practical emphasis to shape man to be perfect and pious beings. The findings of this study has indirectly justified that the desire for human development in meeting the goals of the Islamic Education Philosophy has been achieved. However, greater efforts should be implemented so that students do not only study Islamic Education as a subject in school, but they should also need to appreciate and internalize the teachings in their daily lives.

6. Conclusion

The internalization of *akhlaq* in Islam is the goal of prophecy. A society that is built through moral education is said to be a noble and honourable society. Confidence and strong faith will help individuals to appreciate the character of a Muslim by obeying all the rules and prohibitions in Islam. Students who excel in Islamic Education are students who adhere to religious instruction and practice the values that are not divergent to Islamic teachings and are exemplary conduct. Therefore, students' excellence in Islamic Education should be associated with students' internalization of religious practice.

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