

The Importance of Had Ta'lif and Social Support in Enhancing the Well-being of Muallaf in the State of Selangor

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ABSTRACT

The life of muallaf (newly Muslim convert) as someone who is new to Islam is faced with certain challenges and conflicts. Understanding and practicing Islam in daily life, and subsequently remaining steadfast in the Islamic faith, are among the critical challenges faced by converts (muallaf). This is not an easy task due to factors related to a person's ability to mastering the basic teachings of Islam within the period set by the religious authorities based on the enactment of the Islamic administration of the states in Malaysia. Strong social support may be able to speed up the process of muallaf to be taken out of hand ta'lif or the period of being considered as muallaf. This article discusses the had ta'lif muallaf and as well as the need for social support to enable muallaf to exit the status of muallaf and most importantly retain them in Islam. The writing of this article uses the method of document analysis by referring to the Qur'an, hadith, the kitab turath, journal articles and other literature related to the subject of the study. The method of data analysis is done thematically by forming certain themes that support the research topic. Findings show that the period or had ta'lif is necessary to facilitate matters related to the administration of religious authorities, especially zakat aid. Meanwhile social support whether in spiritual form such as religious guidances, advices or counseling or in a physical form such as material aids and security protection are needed by the converts to ensure the well-being of their lives as a Muslim. The implication of the study is that both had ta'lif and social support are significant to the lives of muallafs and it is the duty of the Muslim community to protect their lives.

Keywords: Had ta'lif, muallaf, social support, well-being, zakat

INTRODUCTION

In summary, Had Ta'lif can be described as a guideline and indicator of the level of understanding and appreciation of Islam by new converts (muallaf) to ensure the proper distribution of zakat assistance for the muallaf category. Meanwhile, social support refers to the forms of assistance that new converts need from family, friends, and institutions, whether material or non-material, to ensure their well-being as Muslims. This article discusses the necessity of Had Ta'lif and social support in the lives of new converts.

As a special group or entity, converts (muallaf) have been given particular attention in Islam through the provision of zakat, with the aim of strengthening their faith and preserving their commitment to Islam. Strengthening their faith and ensuring they remain steadfast in Islam is not an easy task, as various challenges and issues must be addressed by the responsible parties. Among the challenges faced by converts in their post-conversion life are issues related to social support.

Regarding the challenges faced, Nur A_Thiroh Masyaa'il Tan Binti Abdullah et al. (2009) state that converts (*muallaf*) experience significant psychological stress due to external factors such as pressure from family, friends, society, and their environment, which have become the primary causes of psychological stress among Muslim brothers and sisters. This view is also supported by Fuadah et al. (2014), who found that most converts face issues of being ostracized by family members, as well as a lack of assistance and support from the Muslim

community itself (Fuadah Johari et al., 2014).

The issues and challenges faced by converts (*muallaf*) are also highlighted by Nurwati and Azizan (2019). Their study found that there are several problems encountered by *muallaf*. These include being forced to hide their conversion to Islam due to fear of blackmail or rejection by family, friends, and their original ethnic and religious community, living in poverty, confusion in practicing Islamic teachings due to differing opinions and understandings among religious teachers (*asatizah*), a lack of da'wah programs specifically for *muallaf*, and insufficient reference materials. According to Nurwati and Azizan (2019), these problems faced by *muallaf* do not differ significantly across states in Malaysia.

Converts (*muallaf*) need strong support to uphold their faith. Family, the Muslim community, and religious institutions play a key role by providing essential needs—food, shelter, healthcare, safety, education, and employment. Better social support leads to greater religious stability and fulfillment, while its absence can have the opposite effect.

The Concept of Had Ta'lif Mualaf

The word *ta'lif* originates from the root word *alifa*, *ya'lifu*, *ilfan*. *Alifahu* means to like, be fond of, or to tame. Ibn Manzur (1414H: Vol. 9, 9-12) states that *mu'allafah* comes from the word *allafa*. It carries various meanings, including gathering what has been separated and connecting its parts. Hence, it is referred to as "authoring a book" because it involves compiling information and linking it together. Meanwhile, *allafa baynahum* means to strengthen the bond between them (Al-Marbawiyy, n.d.). *Ta'lif al-Qulub* means softening hearts to incline them (towards something). *Ta'lif al-Unas* means being friendly and sociable with people. According to the Kamus Dewan, *muallaf* refers to a person who has recently embraced Islam or a new convert (Kamus Dewan Fourth Edition 2010).

The term *had ta'lif* can generally be defined as a limit or guideline based on specific criteria and mechanisms to determine when a *muallaf* (new Muslim convert) has surpassed the status of someone whose hearts need to be softened through material assistance (such as zakat and other aid), religious guidance and education, as well as moral support to strengthen their faith and ensure their continued adherence to Islam.

Based on practices since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), there has been no fixed ruling or specific determination regarding the *had ta'lif* for those who embrace Islam. The common practice has been to allocate zakat to *muallaf*, as mentioned in Surah al-Tawbah (9:60), with the purpose of *ta'lif*—softening their hearts, strengthening them, and ensuring their permanence in Islam. The four schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*mazhab*) also discuss the rulings and purposes of giving zakat to *muallaf*, but they do not address the *had ta'lif*—how long they remain in the status of *muallaf* or what criteria determine when they can be removed from the *muallaf* status.

The 71st Muzakarah of the Fatwa Committee of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia, held from November 22 to 24, 2005, when discussing the 'Time Frame for Calling New Converts (*Muallaf*)', concluded that there is no text in Islam that obliges a person who has recently embraced Islam to be referred to as a *muallaf*. The mention and time frame for calling someone a *muallaf* are purely based on local customs (*urf*).

However, the *Had Ta'lif* needs to be determined by establishing specific criteria and mechanisms for objective measurement to assist zakat institutions in developing and guiding the *muallaf* category towards achieving a fulfilling life as Muslims, in terms of knowledge and practice, in a structured manner based on a predetermined time frame through Quranic studies and obligatory practices.

From the perspective of its purpose, the distribution of zakat to new converts (*muallaf*) is generally aimed at strengthening religious values within themselves. Religious values have significant power, serving as a guide for individuals to practice their faith as a way of life. In the context of this study, religious values refer to three main aspects: the strength of belief (*akidah*), understanding of Islamic law (*syariat*), and the practice of ethics (*akhlak*) as a Muslim. Islam is a complete way of life (*al-Din*), encompassing three comprehensive values: *akidah*, *syariah*, and *akhlak* (Shofian Ahmad & Amir Husin Mohd. Nor, 2002).

According to Abdul Karim Zaidan (2002), the teachings of Islam begin with the religious values contained in akidah, worship (ibadah), and Islamic ethics (akhlak). Akidah is crucial to human life as it forms the foundation of a person's faith. Belief is an important driving force for goodness, understanding of syariat, and the formation of noble character (akhlak mahmudah). Worship also plays a role in enhancing belief (al-Ghazali, 1994).

According to Ahmad Irdha (2007), the structure of learning religious knowledge is based on the pillars of Islam. It begins with the Shahadatayn (the two testimonies of faith) and what is related to them, such as Tawhid (monotheism) and prophethood. Then, when the time for prayer arrives, one should learn the methods and conditions of prayer. When the month of Ramadan arrives, one should learn how to fast. This journey of seeking knowledge continues and is ongoing, depending on time and circumstances. If someone has doubts regarding matters related to Tawhid, it becomes obligatory at that moment to learn how to eliminate those doubts. This is what is referred to as fardu ain (obligatory knowledge for every individual) (al-Ghazali, n.d.).

From Ibn Abbas (r.a.), it is reported that when the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) sent Muaz (r.a.) to Yemen, he said: "You are going to a people from the People of the Book (Jews and Christians). So, the first thing you should call them to is the worship of Allah." In one narration: "Until they testify to the oneness of Allah (Tawhid)." And in another narration: "Until they bear witness that there is no god but Allah." When they come to know Allah, inform them that Allah has obligated upon them five prayers during the day and night. When they perform these prayers, inform them that Allah has obligated zakat (charity) to be taken from their wealth and given to the poor among them. When they obey this, then take (the zakat) from their wealth, but be cautious of the wealth they hold dear." (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

The characteristics and conditions for a muallaf (new Muslim) to no longer hold that status are when they can know, understand, and practice the fardu ain (obligatory religious knowledge) well. In addition, their social rights, such as housing for those who have been disowned by their families and security, must also be ensured under the law, providing them with stability in life.

According to Fuadah Johari (2018), zakat is given to muallaf with the aim of preventing them from engaging in actions that could lead to social unrest. It also aims to make them aware of Islam as their continuous guide to the right path. Furthermore, through zakat assistance, it indirectly encourages them to draw closer to Allah, so their hearts may open to accepting Islamic teachings. It also serves to show them how Islam consistently cares for and prioritizes the well-being of muallaf.

Based on the discussion above, the Had Ta'lif (criteria for determining the status of a muallaf) can be summarized by considering two main criteria:

1. Mastery of knowledge about the Quran and the basics of fardu ain (obligatory religious knowledge), and
2. The ability to perform religious practices well, enabling one to become a complete Muslim.

In this context, the aspect of duration, based on maqasid al-hasm (the objectives of Islamic law), must also be taken into account in the evaluation or determination of Had Ta'lif for the purpose of managing the administrative affairs of muallaf. This is because it would not be appropriate if someone who has recently embraced Islam, for example, six months ago, but has already mastered the basics of Quranic knowledge and fardu ain and is able to practice them well, is removed from the status of muallaf. Especially when they still have rights to zakat provisions or guidance in other aspects until it is confirmed that their faith (aqidah) is strong.

A specific period of time should also be determined by the government or relevant authorities, based on the fardu ain syllabus prepared for muallaf or in consideration of current circumstances and benefits (maslahah).

Therefore, when someone, in terms of religious knowledge and practice as a Muslim, has achieved a good level of completion and has a strong hold on their faith (aqidah), including having social support or guarantees, they can be considered to have surpassed the Had Ta'lif and can be regarded as no longer holding the status of a muallaf.

Concept And Rights of The Muallaf

Muallaf refers to individuals who have recently embraced Islam and require appropriate attention to prevent them from reverting to their former religion. In terms of zakat distribution, the assistance provided must align with the needs of the muallaf asnaf (category of zakat recipients) so that the funds contributed can adequately support their needs and strengthen their confidence in Islam (Azman et al., 2015).

There are eight categories of asnaf (those eligible to receive zakat) in Islam: the poor (fakir), the needy (miskin), zakat administrators (amil), new converts to Islam (muallaf), those in bondage (riqab), those in debt (gharimin), those in the cause of Allah (fi sabilillah), and travelers in need (ibnu sabil). The right of muallaf to receive zakat is clearly stipulated in the Quran, as mentioned in Surah At-Tawbah, verse 60:

“Indeed, charitable offerings (zakat) are only for the poor and the needy, and for those employed to collect them, and for those whose hearts are to be reconciled (muallaf), and for freeing those in bondage, and for those in debt, and for the cause of Allah, and for the stranded traveler—an obligation imposed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise’

Al-Qaradhawi (1973) explains that the term "muallafah qulubuhum" refers to individuals whose hearts are to be softened towards Islam, inclined to accept it, and remain steadfast in it. This includes preventing their harm towards Muslims, seeking their support in defending Muslims, fighting alongside them against enemies, or similar purposes.

The interpretation of the characteristics of muallaf has also been discussed by earlier jurists (fuqaha). Each school of thought (mazhab) viewed different aspects when defining the muallaf asnaf. Scholars unanimously agree that muallaf refers to those whose hearts are softened towards Islam. However, they differ in their opinions on who is eligible to receive zakat under this category (Al-Zuhayli, 1998; Mawsu'ah Fiqhiyyah, 1975).

The opinion in the Maliki school explains that muallaf refers to non-believers (kafir) who are given zakat to soften their hearts towards Islam, and it is not given to them once they have already embraced Islam. On the other hand, the Shafi'i school states that muallaf refers only to those who have already embraced Islam (Al-Nawawi, 1996). According to Imam Shafi'i in Kitab al-Umm (Vol. 2, p. 97), *muallaf* refers to individuals whose hearts are softened or inclined towards Islam after having embraced it. Based on this interpretation, the *muallaf* category in the Shafi'i school is limited to those who have already converted to Islam. They are given zakat to strengthen their adherence to Islamic faith. This is open to all Muslims without any time restrictions, whether they are new converts or have been Muslims since childhood due to being born and raised in a Muslim family. In the Hanbali school, *muallaf* refers to both Muslims and non-believers (Ibn Qudamah, 1998).

The interpretation that *muallaf* is limited solely to Muslims provides an initial indication that non-believers (kafir) and polytheists (musyrik) are not eligible to receive zakat under the *muallaf* category. This is further emphasized by Imam Shafi'i's statement that it is not permissible to give zakat to polytheists or non-believers with the intention of encouraging them to embrace Islam. According to him, although there is evidence that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) gave some wealth to certain polytheists during the 'Am Hunayn to soften their hearts, that gift actually came from *fay'* (spoils of war) and the Prophet's personal wealth, not from zakat funds. This is further supported by the Prophet's instruction to Mu'adh before he was sent to Yemen, stating that zakat collected from the Muslim population of Yemen should be distributed among those who had pledged allegiance and not to those who opposed or turned away from them (Al-Umm, Vol. 2, p. 97).

According to al-Nawawi in Rawdat al-Thalibin (Vol. 2, pp. 313-314), a jurist of the Shafi'i school, *muallaf* can be divided into two categories: non-believers (kafir) and Muslims. At first glance, this division appears to contradict Imam Shafi'i's view, which limits muallaf to Muslims only. However, in reality, it strengthens his opinion because al-Nawawi also agrees that muallaf kafir should not be given zakat, as stated by Imam Shafi'i. *Muallaf* kafir consists of two groups: first, non-believers whose hearts are softened and inclined towards Islam through the giving of zakat, and second, non-believers whose harm is feared, and thus zakat is given to prevent their wrongdoing. Both groups are not to be given zakat, although some opinions allow giving them from al-khums (one-fifth of war spoils) rather than zakat. There are also opinions that restrict such giving only to

situations of extreme necessity.

Referring to the definitions provided, it can be concluded that *muallaf* refers to individuals whose hearts are softened to incline towards Islam or those who have recently embraced Islam and whose faith is not yet firmly established. Therefore, there are two types of *muallaf*: those who have not yet embraced Islam and those who have already converted to Islam. However, the importance of safeguarding the rights of *muallaf* who have recently embraced Islam is more critical and aligns with the objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid syariah*) to preserve their faith and strengthen their belief. Among the essential elements that require attention in retaining *muallaf* within Islam is ensuring their right to social support, which must be guaranteed.

The Concept and Need for Social Support for Muallaf

Support, according to the Kamus Dewan, refers to an action that expresses agreement, provides encouragement through material assistance (such as money or other means) or nonmaterial assistance, and also includes help. Abdul Halim (2011) views support as a network of relationships that is considered capable of aiding assistance, actions, attitudes, or an emotionally supportive environment that encourages one person to help another. The concept of social support or *al-takaful al-ijtima'i* in Islam is derived from evidence in the Quran and Hadith, which emphasize the spirit of brotherhood and mutual assistance among Muslims. For example, Allah says:

Meaning: "The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your brothers and fear Allah that you may receive mercy." (The Qur'an, Surah al-Hujurat, verse 10)

The concept of mutual assistance and concern for matters of goodness, as explained in Surah al-Ma'idah verse 2, aligns with the concept of social support required for *muallaf* (new converts to Islam). This is also supported by a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW):

From An-Nu'man bin Bashir, who said: The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "The believers, in their mutual love, mercy, and compassion, are like one body. If one part of the body feels pain, the entire body responds with sleeplessness and fever (sharing the pain)." (Sahih Muslim, No. 4685)

The evidence from the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) can serve as the foundation for the concept of social support in the context of *muallaf*.

Regarding the issue of social support for *muallaf*, various studies have been conducted from different perspectives. For example, a study by Nabilah Huda Zaim & Zuliza Mohd Kusrin (2015) found that the support and guarantees for the rights of new Muslims during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) can be classified into two categories: the right to spiritual support and the right to physical support. Spiritual support includes the development and strengthening of faith (*aqidah*), learning the Quran and Sunnah, understanding the rulings of worship and transactions (*muamalat*), the formation of moral character and Islamic etiquette, as well as moral support. As for physical support, it is provided to new Muslims through zakat, charity, gifts, rewards, and sources of protection.

Social support is crucial to ensure that *muallaf* (new converts to Islam) can lead a better and more peaceful life. Being labeled as a "new brother or sister in Islam" is not an easy matter, and it is not the same as being born into a Muslim family. For those who embrace Islam at a young age, the challenges they face are particularly heavy, especially if they are still dependent on their families, such as those still in school or university (Utusan Online, 2019).

According to Aimi Wafa Ahmad & Nur Najwa Abd Rahman (2020), social support is a necessity for empowering new Muslims. This is because social support can help address the challenges faced by new converts, who often require assistance and encouragement after embracing Islam. Positive relationships with those around them are essential to help them remain strong in facing trials and challenges. Social support is closely linked to the meaning of an individual's daily life. In other words, a person's life becomes more meaningful when they receive social support from the surrounding community (Marianne G. Dunn & Karen M. O'Brien, 2009).

Social support is essential for *muallaf* (new converts to Islam). According to Azarudin & Khadijah (2014),

various issues such as questions about the reasons for converting to Islam, doubts about the sincerity of their intention in choosing Islam as a way of life, changing their original names to Muslim names, marrying into Malay Muslim families, and the expectation of receiving zakat funds often haunt those in the early stages of embracing Islam. These issues can lead to confusion and disappointment, creating pressure on this group due to influences that affect the quality of life of muallaf, in particular.

A study by Aishah et al. (2021) also found that social support is highly necessary for *muallaf* in their process of embracing and practicing the religion. This is because they often face various pressures that disturb their emotions and can potentially shake their faith (*aqidah*).

Regarding the foundation of social support, Abu Bakar and Ismail (2018) state that there are five main needs that should be fulfilled and managed by the parties responsible for muallaf (new converts to Islam). These include identity, religious education and guidance, financial and welfare support, dakwah (Islamic propagation) and counseling, and legal assistance. The aspects highlighted by Abu Bakar and Ismail are closely related to the needs of *muallaf* to be supported and assisted so that they can remain steadfast in Islam and live a fulfilling life as Muslims.

This concept of *Takaful Ijtima'i* (social solidarity) was demonstrated by Sayyidina Uthman (r.a.) when he purchased a well for the people of Madinah. Originally, they had to buy water from a Jewish man at a high price. When the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) became aware of the need for water, he promised a great reward to anyone who purchased the well for the Muslims. Sayyidina Uthman (r.a.) stepped forward and initially bought half of the well, with one day's water allocated to him and the other to the Jewish man. Eventually, the Jewish man suffered losses because the Muslims only took water on the day allocated to Sayyidina Uthman for free and no longer purchased water from him. As a result, he sold the remaining portion of the well to Sayyidina Uthman (HR Ahmad & Tirmidhi). Ultimately, the well was made into a waqf (endowment) for the benefit of Muslims, and it remains so to this day (Al-Buti, 1426H).

Ta'lif Qulub (softening hearts) by giving wealth to strengthen the hearts of muallaf—whether they are new converts to Islam, inclined to embrace Islam, or loyal to the Islamic state—was demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during the Battle of Hunain. The Prophet showed social support through the distribution of wealth when the Muslims emerged victorious in this battle by giving away a large amount of war spoils (Al-Buti, 1426H).

In connection with this, Sayyidina Abu Sufyan, who was the leader of the people of Makkah and had recently embraced Islam during the Conquest of Makkah (Fath Makkah), requested his share. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) gave him one hundred measures of gold (20 kg), one hundred measures of silver (20 kg), and one hundred camels. When he requested a share for his sons, Yazid and Muawiyah, the Prophet gave them the same amount. Hakim bin Huzam also asked for his share and was given 300 camels. War spoils were also given to Safwan bin Umayyah, who was a leader of the people of Makkah and had not yet embraced Islam at the time. He received 100 measures of gold, 100 measures of silver, and 100 camels. This generosity led him to invite his tribe to Islam. It is also reported that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) distributed khumus (one-fifth of war spoils) to Arab leaders such as Suhayl bin Amr, Al-Harith bin Hisham, Al-Nadhir bin Al-Harith, Abbas bin Mirdas, and others (Ibn Hisham, 1955).

Although the vast amount of war spoils was intended to soften and incline hearts towards accepting Islam, it was not understood by some of the companions (*sahabat*) because they themselves did not receive a share. This continued until the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself explained it in his statement:

Meaning: "O people of Ansar, in this small worldly matter, I am softening the hearts of people so that they may embrace Islam, while I entrust you to your Islam. Are you not pleased, O Ansar, that the people return with sheep and camels, while you return with the Messenger of Allah to your homes?" (Narrated by Ahmad)

Based on studies related to the issue of social support and the examples set by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his companions, it is evident that *muallaf* (new converts to Islam) require social security or *al-takaful al-ijtima'i* (social solidarity) to build their understanding of Islam and strengthen their faith (*aqidah*) so that they

remain steadfast in Islam. Therefore, a specific study is needed to examine the importance and relationship between social support and the understanding, practice, and appreciation of religion among *muallaf*.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Had Ta'lif* can be explained as a guideline and indicator of the level of understanding and appreciation of Islam by *muallaf* (new converts to Islam) to ensure the proper distribution of zakat assistance for the *muallaf* asnaf. On the other hand, social support refers to the support needed by *muallaf* from family, friends, and institutions, whether in material or nonmaterial forms, to ensure their well-being as Muslims. The period of being labeled as a *muallaf* is a critical phase for an individual. It tests their faith and commitment to Islam. *Had Ta'lif* serves as a means to determine whether someone is capable of moving beyond the status of *muallaf*, as well as an indicator of the commitment of religious authorities to prioritize the needs of *muallaf* during this the community—so that they can transition out of the *muallaf* status more quickly while remaining steadfast in Islam.

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