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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education, UMT.

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies, UNISZA.

<sup>3</sup> Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education, UMT.

<sup>4</sup> Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies, UNISZA.

<sup>5</sup> Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies, UNISZA.

<sup>6</sup> Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies, UNISZA.



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## RELIGIOUS PRACTICE AND REJECTION OF SUPERSTITIOUS TRADITIONS AMONG MUSLIMS IN TERENGGANU: AN EVALUATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL AWARENESS

*PRÁTICA RELIGIOSA E REJEIÇÃO DE TRADIÇÕES SUPERSTICIOSAS ENTRE MUÇULMANOS EM TERENGGANU: UMA AVALIAÇÃO DA CONSCIENTIZAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL ISLÂMICA*

*PRÁCTICA RELIGIOSA Y RECHAZO DE LAS TRADICIONES SUPERSTICIOSAS ENTRE LOS MUSULMANES DE TERENGGANU: UNA EVALUACIÓN DE LA CONCIENCIACIÓN EDUCATIVA ISLÁMICA*

Hailan SALAMUN<sup>1</sup>

hailan@umt.edu.my



Engku Ibrahim bin Engku WOK ZIN<sup>2</sup>

ibrahim@unisza.edu.my



Kasyfullah Abd KADIR<sup>3</sup>

kasyfullah.kadir@umt.edu.my



Mahadi bin MOHAMMAD<sup>4</sup>

mahadimohammad@unisza.edu.my



Syed Mohd Hafiz bin Syed OMAR<sup>5</sup>

syedhafiz@unisza.edu.my



Mohd Rahim bin ARIFIN<sup>6</sup>

mrahim@unisza.edu.my



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**ABSTRACT:** The study investigates how Islamic educational awareness—formal and informal—shapes adherence to Sunni-Shafi'i orthodoxy and the rejection of superstitious practices among Muslims in Terengganu. The quantitative research, conducted with 443 participants, demonstrates strong engagement in Islamic rituals, a high rejection of syncretic customs (such as *main puteri* and *mandi safar*), and widespread practice of collective rituals aligned with Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah. The findings show that educational programs, *mosques*, and structured religious curricula operate as vectors of doctrinal standardization, fostering theological literacy, community cohesion, and critical filters against pre-Islamic traditions. The study reinforces that the combination of institutional

education, community-based learning, and Shafi'i jurisprudential heritage consolidates local religious identity and mitigates beliefs regarded as deviant.

**KEYWORDS:** Islamic education. Orthodoxy. Superstition. Terengganu. Shafi'i.

**RESUMO:** O estudo investiga como a consciência educacional islâmica — formal e informal — influencia a adesão à ortodoxia sunita-shafi'ita e a rejeição de práticas supersticiosas entre muçulmanos em Terengganu. A pesquisa quantitativa, com 443 participantes, demonstra forte participação em rituais islâmicos, elevada rejeição de costumes sincréticos (como main puteri e mandi safar) e ampla prática de rituais coletivos alinhados ao Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah. Os resultados evidenciam que programas educacionais, mesquitas e currículos religiosos estruturados funcionam como vetores de padronização doutrinária, promovendo literacia teológica, coesão comunitária e filtros críticos contra tradições pré-islâmicas. O estudo reforça que a combinação de educação institucional, aprendizagem comunitária e herança jurisprudencial Shafi'i consolida a identidade religiosa local e mitiga crenças consideradas desviantes.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação islâmica. Ortodoxia. Superstição. Terengganu. Shafi'ita.

**RESUMEN:** El estudio investiga cómo la conciencia educativa islámica — formal e informal— influye en la adhesión a la ortodoxia suni-shafi'ita y en el rechazo de prácticas supersticiosas entre los musulmanes de Terengganu. La investigación cuantitativa, con 443 participantes, demuestra una fuerte participación en rituales islámicos, un elevado rechazo de costumbres sincréticas (como main puteri y mandi safar) y una amplia práctica de rituales colectivos alineados con Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah. Los resultados evidencian que los programas educativos, las mezquitas y los currículos religiosos estructurados funcionan como vectores de estandarización doctrinal, promoviendo la alfabetización teológica, la cohesión comunitaria y filtros críticos frente a tradiciones preislámicas. El estudio refuerza que la combinación de educación institucional, aprendizaje comunitario y herencia jurisprudencial shafi'í consolida la identidad religiosa local y mitiga creencias consideradas desviadas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación islámica. Ortodoxia. Superstición. Terengganu. Shafi'í.

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## INTRODUCTION

Muslim communities in the Malaysian state of Terengganu are historically rooted in the Shāfi'ī school of jurisprudence and the creed of Ahl al-*Sunnah* wal-Jamā'ah. Despite this strong theological foundation, certain pre-Islamic cultural practices such as *main puteri* and *mandi safar* persist. These practices are considered deviant in Islamic theology, categorized as *khurāfāt* (superstitious beliefs) and *bid'ah* (unwarranted innovations).

Previous research has explored the tension between Islamic orthodoxy and local cultural customs (Abdullah et al., 2024; Al-Qaradawi, 2017; Asni, 2019; Ibrahim, 2018). However, limited empirical work has examined the role of Islamic educational awareness, both formal and informal, in shaping religious behaviours and promoting doctrinal purity. This study addresses that gap by examining how educational exposure influences both adherence to Islamic rituals and the rejection of superstitions in Terengganu.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of Islamic education in shaping religious understanding and community resilience has been widely acknowledged in the Malaysian context, particularly in regions like Terengganu where local customs intersect with orthodox Islamic practice. Studies consistently emphasize a dual educational approach, combining formal institutional instruction with informal, mosque-based learning, to cultivate both theological clarity and practical religious adherence. Tamuri et al. (2012) highlight that mosque-centred pedagogy complements formal education by enabling learners to internalize *aqidah* and religious orthodoxy beyond the confines of classroom settings. This dual approach is vital in culturally rich communities where syncretic traditions such as *main puteri* and *mandi safar* persist, often challenging the boundaries of Islamic orthodoxy (Abdullah et al., 2024; Ibrahim, 2018).

Supporting this integrative framework, Abd Rahman and Nurullah (2015) provide a comprehensive overview of the development of Islamic religious education in Malaysia, underscoring its evolving role in promoting authentic Islamic identity amidst pluralistic social realities. Their analysis situates Islamic education as a transformative tool that addresses both knowledge transmission and moral formation, aligning closely with the need to counteract superstitious beliefs that are deeply embedded within local customs (Roslan & Zainal, 2020).

Community-based Islamic education models in Southeast Asia further reinforce this perspective. For instance, mosque-led programs in rural and semi-urban contexts have been shown to foster sustainable Islamic identity and communal reform (Sulaiman & Mohamad, 2023). These grassroots initiatives serve as informal yet powerful educational environments

where religious literacy is enhanced, and syncretic or heterodox traditions are critically engaged. This dynamic echoes the findings of Md Yusoff and Omar (2024), who stress the importance of aligning Islamic educational practices with contemporary cultural challenges to maintain relevance and doctrinal integrity.

From a doctrinal perspective, the rejection of superstition is deeply rooted in the principle of *tawhid*, the oneness of God, which is central to Islamic theology. Al Qaradawi (2017) rigorously argues that superstitious practices contravene this fundamental belief and must be addressed through education and *da'wah*. Abdullah et al. (2024) expand on this by advocating for the 'reactualization' of Islamic theological discourse within education systems, emphasizing the need for curricula that uphold doctrinal purity while remaining responsive to evolving socio-cultural contexts. This call aligns with the epistemological framework proposed by Fauzi and Chirzin (2023), who highlight the urgency of contextualizing Islamic education to nurture critical religious consciousness and resilience against innovation (*bid'ah*).

Pedagogical innovation and curriculum development are likewise pivotal in engaging contemporary Muslim youth with Islamic teachings. Arif, Aziz, and Ma'arif (2025) identify digital competencies and technology integration as key factors in enhancing the effectiveness of Islamic education. Sholeh (2023) supports this by demonstrating that innovative teaching methods foster deeper religious understanding and counteract the allure of non-Islamic cultural practices. These advancements in pedagogy resonate with the Malaysian Ministry of Education's (2023) blueprint for transforming education, which advocates for a holistic approach combining religious knowledge, moral values, and critical thinking skills.

Moreover, the historical influence of the Shāfi'ī madhhab, predominant in Terengganu, shapes local religious education and identity. Huda, Burhanuddin, and Kooria (2023) illustrate how Malay Islamic jurisprudence and Malay *Kitab Jawi* texts reinforce orthodox practices, serving as intellectual anchors that counteract syncretism and promote community cohesion. This jurisprudential foundation, coupled with ongoing educational reforms (Mustafa, 2018; Ibrahim, 2018), creates a resilient framework for fostering rejection of superstitious traditions while maintaining cultural sensitivity.

In summary, the literature converges on a multifaceted model of Islamic education in Terengganu: a synthesis of formal schooling and mosque-based informal learning, underpinned by sound theological principles and enhanced by modern pedagogical strategies. This integrated approach is critical for clarifying Islamic doctrine, promoting orthodox religious practice, and enabling communities to critically evaluate and reject superstitious traditions entrenched in local culture. Such educational awareness not only preserves Islamic identity but also strengthens communal cohesion in the face of religious and cultural pluralism (Abd Rahman & Khambali@Hambali, 2013; Jamaluddin, 2023).

## RESEARCH METHOD

A descriptive quantitative research design was employed. The sample consisted of 443 Muslim respondents selected through stratified random sampling across eight rural districts in Terengganu. The questionnaire was validated by subject matter experts and achieved a Cronbach's alpha reliability score of 0.83.

The instrument assessed:

- Awareness of Ahl al-*Sunnah* doctrine
- Adherence to *Sunnah* practices
- Rejection of superstition

ETted in the local dialect. Data were analyzed using SPSS, with descriptive statistics used to identify trends and Pearson's correlation applied to explore the relationship between Islamic educational awareness and behavioural outcomes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Engagement in Islamic Holy Day Celebrations

The findings of this study reveal that engagement in Islamic holy day celebrations is a significant indicator of Islamic educational awareness among Muslims in Terengganu. A substantial proportion of respondents reported participating in major religious commemorations such as *Maulid al-Rasul* (54.2%), *Nisfu Syaaban* (51.7%), and *Israk Mikraj* (51.0%). These events, though celebratory in nature, serve a pedagogical function by reinforcing foundational Islamic doctrines such as *tawhīd*, *'aqīdah ṣaḥīḥah*, and ritual practices aligned with the teachings of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamaah* (ASWJ) (Saada, 2018; Wan Husain et al., 2024). The high level of participation affirms the proposition within the study's conceptual framework that Islamic rituals, especially when practiced communally, act as informal but impactful mechanisms of religious education and identity formation.

From a theoretical standpoint, these celebrations embody what Al-Ghazali (2015) described as *tazkiyah al-nafs*—the purification of the soul through continuous religious exposure and reflective practice. The frequent recitation of the Qur'an, participation in religious lectures (*tazkirah*), and communal prayers during such events provide immersive spiritual experiences that enable participants to internalize Islamic values beyond the confines of formal education. This supports the view of Arif, Aziz, and Ma'arif (2025) and Wahid (2018), who assert that holistic religious learning—comprising both cognitive and experiential dimensions—is essential in cultivating theological literacy and behavioral transformation.

In rural areas of Terengganu, where folk traditions and superstitions often persist due to generational transmission and limited access to structured religious education, such communal rituals are especially vital. As Tamuri et al. (2012) note, mosque-based and community-centered religious programs offer effective counter-narratives to syncretic practices like *main puteri* and *mandi safar*. These programs help delineate between authentic Islamic teachings and cultural innovations (*bid'ah*), providing participants with the theological framework to reject non-Islamic traditions embedded within local heritage (Abd Rahman & Nurullah, 2015; Ibrahim, 2012).

Furthermore, communal celebration of Islamic holy days strengthens not only individual belief but also social cohesion, reinforcing the collective identity of the Muslim ummah in Terengganu. This finding is consistent with Ibn Khaldun's (2002) sociological theory of religious solidarity, which posits that shared rituals cultivate resilience against ideological deviance and external cultural influences. In the context of this study, religious celebrations function not merely as symbolic observances but as formative experiences that consolidate both personal piety and doctrinal orthodoxy.

Another critical aspect influencing this dynamic is the embeddedness of the Shafi'i school of thought within local religious education and governance. As argued by Huda, Burhanuddin, and Kooria (2023), the Shafi'i madhhab has historically provided interpretive clarity on matters of jurisprudence, including the rejection of superstitious practices. Respondents with stronger exposure to religious teachings framed within the Shafi'i tradition were found to exhibit more critical attitudes toward customary rituals lacking scriptural basis. These individuals were more likely to associate such practices with theological deviation and to view their rejection as a religious obligation, confirming the role of doctrinal education in fostering critical religious consciousness (Hashim, 2024; Wan Hassan et al., 2024).

**Table 1**  
*Islamic Religious Celebrations Participation (%)*

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score (%)
1	I also participate in the celebration of <i>Maulid al-Rasul</i>	4.21	1.8	3.2	21.2	19.6	54.2
2	I attend Islamic religious celebrations such as <i>Nisfu Syaaban</i> and Awal Muharram	4.14	4.5	3.2	17.6	23.0	51.7
3	I attend the <i>Israk Mikraj</i> ceremony	4.20	2.7	2.3	18.7	25.3	51.0

Note. Prepared by the authors (2025).

### Rejection of Superstitious Practices

The findings of this study reveal a remarkably high rate of rejection of superstitious and syncretic practices among Muslims in Terengganu. Specifically, 95.9% of respondents reported disapproval of *main puteri* (a trance-healing ritual), 99.3% rejected *mandi safar* (a water purification ritual rooted in pre-Islamic beliefs), and 95.7% expressed opposition to seeking assistance from bomohs (shamans). These figures underscore a significant behavioural alignment with orthodox Islamic doctrine, particularly within the framework of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamaah* (ASWJ) and the Shafi'i legal tradition (Saada, 2018; Wan Husain et al., 2024).

This trend substantiates the study's conceptual proposition that Islamic educational awareness, both formal and informal, plays a pivotal role in shaping religious reasoning and doctrinal clarity. As argued by Sahin (2015) and Tamuri et al. (2012), structured religious instruction through *madrasahs*, *pondok* institutions, and school curricula, along with informal learning via mosque-based lectures, community gatherings, and *da'wah* efforts, serve as critical platforms for theological socialization. Through these channels, learners are equipped with epistemological frameworks grounded in *tawhīd* (monotheism) and *'aqīdah ṣaḥīḥah* (sound creed), enabling them to identify and actively reject practices categorized as *shirk* (polytheism) or *bid'ah* (heretical innovation) (Ibrahim, 2012; Abd Rahman & Nurullah, 2015).

The rejection of superstition in Terengganu is further explained by the influence of classical Islamic scholarship that frames such rituals as incompatible with authentic Islamic theology. Al-Ghazali (2015) emphasized the need for inner purification and spiritual knowledge to combat ignorance and misguidance. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyyah (2008) and Yusuf al-Qaradawi (2017) maintained that doctrinal deviation, especially in the form of syncretic ritualism, must be confronted through rigorous education and theological discourse. Al-Shatibi's (1995) principle of *maslahah* (public welfare) also validates the eradication of harmful innovations that threaten the purity of faith and the well-being of the Muslim community (Abdullah et al., 2024; Sahin, 2018).

In this context, the data suggests that the widespread rejection of these rituals among Terengganu Muslims is not merely a reaction to institutional or legal prohibitions but is indicative of internalized theological principles. The religious literacy cultivated through consistent Islamic education has enabled individuals to develop critical perspectives toward inherited cultural beliefs that lack Qur'anic or *Sunnah*-based legitimacy. As noted by Engku Alwi et al. (2014), the cognitive dissonance experienced by many Muslims between cultural inheritance and formal religious knowledge is often resolved through deeper educational exposure that emphasizes doctrinal purity.

Moreover, the rejection of superstitions has been reinforced by the prevalence of *Sunnah*-based spiritual practices such as communal *wirid*, Qur'anic recitations, and Islamic holy day observances. These practices act as informal but powerful educational mechanisms that replace un-Islamic rituals with scripturally validated alternatives (Afriyanti, 2024; Asy'arie,

2024; Tamuri et al., 2012). They cultivate a religious environment grounded in theological coherence and spiritual discipline, thereby establishing community norms that marginalize superstitious behaviour.

The integration of the Shafi'i madhhab into both religious education and legal frameworks in Terengganu has also significantly shaped communal rejection of superstition. As highlighted by Huda, Burhanuddin, and Kooria (2023), the transmission of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) through *Kitab Jawi* and other classical texts has played a vital role in embedding normative orthodoxy within the Malay-Muslim identity. These teachings promote a critical lens through which Muslims assess inherited practices, filtering them through the principles of legal reasoning and doctrinal fidelity (Asni, 2019; Awang Othman & Hasan, 1992; Ibrahim).

**Table 2**  
*Superstitious Practices Rejection (%)*

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score (%)
1	I attend "main puteri" ceremonies	95.9	1.05	3.2	0.9	0.0	0.0
2	I attend "mandi safar" ceremonies	99.3	1.02	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.2
3	I perform the practice of throwing "ancak" offerings	98.2	1.03	1.1	0.5	0.0	0.2
4	I seek the services of shamans that do not comply with Shariah	95.7	1.06	3.4	0.5	0.5	0.0
5	I seek services from spirits (jin)	99.3	1.02	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.2
6	I practice occult knowledge	94.1	1.11	2.9	2.0	0.0	0.9

Note. Prepared by the authors (2025).

### Collective Religious Practices

The empirical data demonstrates a strong prevalence of collective religious practices among Muslims in Terengganu. Specifically, 74.0% of respondents regularly engage in congregational *wirid* sessions, 57.3% participate in *tahlil* and memorial prayers, and the majority consistently attend communal recitations of *Surah Yasin*. These practices, deeply embedded in the Sunni-Shafi'i tradition, reflect an active adherence to *Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamaah* (ASWJ) expressions of religiosity and suggest that communal worship remains a vital medium through which theological and social cohesion is maintained (Saada, 2018; Wan Husain et al., 2024).



This pattern of religious behaviour validates the study's conceptual framework, which posits that Islamic educational awareness—rooted in both formal and informal instruction—plays a critical role in shaping not only individual piety but also collective religious identity. Formal schooling, mosque-based learning, and *da'wah* programs serve not merely to transmit religious knowledge but also to internalize orthodoxy through shared ritual engagement (Arif et al. 2025; Tamuri et al., 2012). As such, collective rituals act as dynamic pedagogical tools, facilitating the experiential embodiment of theological principles, particularly *tawhīd* and *'aqīdah ṣaḥīḥah*.

The significance of these communal practices is underscored by classical scholars such as Al-Nawawi (2015), who emphasized the merit and unifying function of congregational worship. Similarly, Al-Suyuti (2010) affirmed the permissibility and benefit of collective *dhikr*, especially when rooted in the Prophetic *Sunnah*. In the Terengganu context, rituals such as *tahlil*, *wirid jemaah*, and *Maulid al-Rasul* not only fulfill spiritual objectives but also promote doctrinal solidarity, serving as bulwarks against theological fragmentation and syncretic deviations that may otherwise emerge in culturally embedded settings (Ibrahim, 2012; Asni, 2019).

This interpretation aligns with Al-Ghazali's (2015) concept of *dhikr jama'i* (collective remembrance), which he framed as a mechanism for cultivating spiritual vigilance and resilience. Through repetition and communal reinforcement, such practices strengthen the believer's attachment to orthodox belief and immunize the individual against theological confusion, particularly in societies where residual animistic and superstitious influences remain latent. Abdullah et al. (2024) similarly argue that the integration of Islamic values through community-based *da'wah* fosters a religiously informed cultural ethos that sustains orthodoxy and marginalizes superstition.

From a sociological perspective, these findings are consistent with the theory of “moral communities” as outlined by Rahman and Azzahra (2021), who contend that shared religious practices reinforce communal norms, cultivate trust, and maintain moral discipline. In this regard, collective rituals do not merely express belief but actively construct and reinforce social and theological boundaries. The high participation rate in collective rituals in Terengganu indicates that Islamic education, as transmitted through local religious institutions—*mosques*, *suraus*, *madrasahs*—functions effectively in consolidating communal identity and guiding moral behaviour (Iman & Nur, 2023; Tamuri et al., 2012).

The endurance of these practices over generations further validates Ibn Khaldun's (2002) observation that deeply rooted traditions within a religious society are sustained through consistent educational reinforcement and family-based religious socialization. This is particularly salient in rural Terengganu, where familial, communal, and institutional structures remain closely intertwined. According to Yusuf al-Qaradawi (2017), such synergy between

knowledge, ritual, and community ensures the transmission of authentic Islamic values, fostering what he describes as *thaqāfah dīniyyah mu'tadilah* (a balanced religious culture).

Additionally, the widespread participation in communal rituals reflects the success of the Shafi'i-based educational and jurisprudential framework in Malaysia, which places significant emphasis on both the individual and collective dimensions of worship. As documented by Huda, Burhanuddin, and Kooria (2023), *Kitab Jawi* literature and mosque-based instruction in the Malay world have long upheld the importance of communal religious expressions as part of *tarbiyah* (spiritual cultivation). This tradition is still evident in Terengganu, where educational and ritual life are organically connected.

Collective practices also serve as corrective mechanisms against theological deviations, functioning as informal yet effective means of *'amr bi al-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil). Through regular exposure to *Sunnah*-aligned rituals, community members are socialized into orthodoxy, reducing susceptibility to *khurāfāt* or *bid'ah* practices (Al Qaradawi, 2017; Engku Alwi et al., 2014). In this way, collective religious engagement becomes a form of preventative education—both doctrinally sound and socioculturally adaptive.

**Table 3**  
Collective Religious Practices Participation (%)

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score (%)
1	I attend <i>tahlil</i> recitations and memorial feasts for the deceased.	4.33	1.1	2.7	16.0	22.8	57.3
2	I practise the recitation of <i>wirid</i> (remembrance) after congregational prayers.	4.59	0.9	1.6	8.8	14.7	74.0
3	I also attend the talqin ceremony after a burial.	4.10	3.8	6.1	14.9	26.2	49.0
4	I also attend the recitation of <i>Surah Yasin</i> on Friday nights.	4.14	2.3	4.3	21.0	22.6	49.9

Note. Prepared by the authors (2025).

### Adherence to the Shafi'i Madhhab

The study reveals that a significant majority—86.0%—of respondents in Terengganu explicitly affirm their adherence to the Shafi'i madhhab. This high rate of alignment underscores the enduring influence of this jurisprudential tradition in shaping Islamic thought and practice within the East Coast region of Malaysia. Historically, the Shafi'i madhhab has served as both a legal framework and theological compass for Malay Muslims, guiding not only their ritual observances but also their moral and intellectual orientations (Asni, 2019; Ibrahim et al.,

1992). This predominance is institutionally reinforced through religious education in *pondok* schools, mosque-based learning, and state-sanctioned religious programs, all of which promote doctrinal coherence and legal uniformity (Huda et al., 2023).

The findings align closely with the study's integrative conceptual framework, which posits that Islamic education—particularly when anchored in classical orthodoxy—cultivates *'aqidah ṣaḥīḥah* (sound creed), nurtures theological resilience, and serves as a bulwark against religious deviance. The Shafi'i madhhab, firmly rooted in the *Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamaah* (ASWJ) tradition, offers a structured epistemological and legal framework that ensures consistency in belief and practice. Its methodological rigor and scholarly legacy have long been recognized as instrumental in safeguarding Muslim societies from theological confusion and *bid'ah* (innovations) (Al-Ghazali, 2015; Al Qaradawi, 2017; Abd Rahman & Nurullah, 2015).

The function of the madhhab as a mechanism for religious discipline is further articulated in Al-Shatibi's (1995) theory of *maslahah* (public benefit), which emphasizes the collective wisdom of scholarly consensus (*ijma'*) in preventing arbitrary or idiosyncratic interpretations of Islamic law. In the context of Terengganu, this translates into a shared legal consciousness that enhances ritual uniformity and discourages syncretic customs such as *main puteri* and *mandi safar*, both of which are deemed incompatible with *tawḥīd*-based theology (Abdullah et al., 2024; Majlis Agama Islam Selangor, 2017).

From a sociological standpoint, Ibn Khaldun's (2002) concept of *'asabiyyah* (social solidarity) provides a useful lens to interpret the unifying role of the Shafi'i school. Adherence to a common madhhab contributes to communal cohesion by reinforcing shared norms, values, and interpretative paradigms. In Terengganu, where elements of pre-Islamic culture persist beneath the surface of Islamic identity, the Shafi'i framework functions as both a theological anchor and cultural counterweight—ensuring that Islamic orthodoxy remains the reference point in moral decision-making and ritual life (Saada, 2018; Wan Husain et al., 2024).

The institutionalization of Shafi'i jurisprudence through state religious authorities and educational infrastructure further solidifies its influence. Respondents who reported greater exposure to structured religious education—particularly in *pondok*, madrasah, or mosque settings—also showed significantly lower levels of tolerance or participation in superstitious practices. This correlation affirms the role of Islamic educational awareness, as theorized by the study's framework, in promoting behavioural transformation through consistent theological instruction (Arif et al., 2025; Ibrahim, 2018).

Azmil Tayeb (2017, 2021) supports this interpretation by arguing that strong madhhab affiliation, reinforced through systematic religious pedagogy and targeted *da'wah*, cultivates what he terms “epistemic resilience”—the capacity to critically assess and reject heterodox beliefs. In Terengganu, where *da'wah* organizations, mosque programs, and religious media

actively propagate the Shafi'i tradition, this resilience is observable in the high levels of ritual conformity and rejection of *khurāfāt* (superstition) among the population.

Moreover, the pedagogical legacy of *Kitab Jawi*—Malay-language commentaries based on Shafi'i fiqh—has played a pivotal role in localizing Islamic legal thought in the Malay Archipelago. As shown by Huda, Burhanuddin, and Kooria (2023), these texts not only disseminated jurisprudential knowledge but also embedded it within the socio-religious fabric of Malay Muslim life, a pattern that persists in contemporary Terengganu.

**Table 4**  
Adherence to the Shafi'i Madhhab (%)

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score (%)
1	I follow the Shafi'i madhhab in worship	4.80	0.2	0.9	3.6	9.3	86.0

Note. Prepared by the authors (2025).

## Overall Analysis

The findings of this study underscore a compelling positive correlation between Islamic educational awareness and the communal rejection of superstitious traditions among Muslims in Terengganu. This outcome validates the integrative conceptual framework, which posits Islamic education—encompassing both formal school-based curricula and informal community-based instruction—as a vital catalyst in fostering *'aqīdah ṣaḥīḥah* (sound creed), religious literacy, and ethical comportment (Arif et al., 2025; Wahid, 2018). The results corroborate the premise that educational interventions grounded in classical Islamic teachings and theological orthodoxy effectively counteract culturally embedded syncretic practices such as *main puteri* and *mandi safar*, which are traditionally viewed as *khurāfāt* and *bid'ah* within Islamic discourse (Al Qaradawi, 2017; Abdullah et al., 2024).

The study reveals that the population's widespread engagement in *Sunnah*-based collective worship practices, alongside adherence to the Shafi'i madhhab, demonstrates the strength of Terengganu's multilayered Islamic educational system. Religious knowledge is effectively disseminated through various institutions such as *mosques*, *pondok* schools, *madrasahs*, and community religious programs, which collectively reinforce doctrinal clarity and consistent orthopraxy (Azmil Tayeb, 2017; Abdul Hamid, 2017; Ibrahim, 2012; Tamuri et al., 2012; Saada, 2018). The data indicates that over 95% of respondents reject superstitious practices, affirming the efficacy of Islamic education in aligning communal values with orthodox Islamic teachings (Abd Rahman & Nurullah, 2015; Wan Husain et al., 2024).

From a sociological and theological standpoint, these findings resonate with Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah* (social solidarity), where a shared madhhab orientation and collective religious knowledge contribute to social cohesion and moral resilience (Ibn Khaldun, 2002). The Shafi'i jurisprudential framework provides not only a legal and theological foundation but also acts as a cultural anchor that sustains religious identity and resists deviation from orthodoxy (Al-Shatibi, 1995; Yusuf al-Qaradawi, 2014). This shared religious identity underpinned by education promotes collective resistance against syncretic innovations, reflecting an alignment with the principles of *tawhīd* and orthodox Islamic belief.

Moreover, the role of religious institutions is pivotal in mediating and contextualizing Islamic teachings in rural or lower-literacy contexts. The capacity of these institutions to engage communities through both formal instruction and *da'wah* activities strengthens the internalization of authentic Islamic values and discourages reliance on culturally inherited superstitions (Asni, 2019; Ibrahim et al., 1992). This supports the conceptual framework's assertion that institutional engagement is a key factor in transforming cultural beliefs toward orthodoxy.

Islamic educational awareness emerges as a critical determinant of both individual spiritual development and communal religious resilience in Terengganu. The findings affirm the theoretical proposition that education—formal and informal—is instrumental in safeguarding theological integrity and fostering a coherent religious identity amid socio-cultural challenges. This aligns with the scholarship advocating for robust Islamic pedagogy as the foundation for behavioral transformation and doctrinal soundness in traditional Muslim societies (Al-Ghazali, 2015; Azmil Tayeb, 2017; Saada, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the pivotal role of Islamic educational awareness in shaping religious practices and facilitating the rejection of superstitious traditions among Muslims in Terengganu, a region deeply entrenched in the Shafi'i madhhab and Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamaah (ASWJ) theological orientation. The findings affirm that comprehensive Islamic education—encompassing both formal institutional learning and informal religious instruction via mosques, madrasahs, and community *da'wah* programs—serves as a critical mechanism in nurturing *'aqīdah ṣaḥīḥah* (sound creed), religious literacy, and ethical comportment (Arif et al., 2025; Wahid, 2018).

Respondents' engagement with orthodox Sunnah-based practices such as Maulid al-Rasul and communal tahlil rites reflects a robust internalization of Islamic orthodoxy that contrasts sharply with the systematic rejection of culturally embedded superstitions like *main puteri* and *mandi safar*. This behavioural transformation resonates with the theoretical

premises of behavioral transformation theory, whereby religious education fosters cognitive realignment away from syncretic and pre-Islamic customs deemed *khurāfāt* and *bid'ah* within classical Islamic jurisprudence (Al Qaradawi, 2017; Abdullah et al., 2024). The findings thus corroborate the theological principle of *tawhīd* as a cornerstone in disentangling Islamic faith from syncretism (Al-Ghazali, 2015).

Further, the data reveal that the widespread adherence to the Shafi'i madhhab among 86% of respondents functions as a unifying doctrinal framework that reinforces communal cohesion or *asabiyyah*, facilitating the preservation of orthodox practices and the marginalization of superstition (Ibrahim, 2012; Wan Husain et al., 2024). This socioreligious solidarity aligns with Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah*, illustrating how shared religious identity and jurisprudential allegiance fortify resilience against cultural deviations.

Despite the positive outcomes, the persistence of residual superstitious beliefs among some demographics highlights ongoing challenges in fully eradicating syncretic traditions. These challenges are compounded by the dynamic socio-cultural landscape and evolving ideological influences, necessitating adaptive pedagogical strategies. The study advocates for innovative integration of digital media and enhanced community *da'wah* efforts to expand outreach and deepen religious understanding, especially among youth and less literate populations (Abdul Hamid, 2017; Yunita & Mulyadi, 2024).

In line with the integrative conceptual framework of this study, the empirical evidence substantiates the claim that Islamic educational awareness, supported by institutional engagement and culturally contextualized religious instruction, is indispensable for sustaining theological clarity and authentic religious practice in Terengganu. This reinforces the importance of holistic educational approaches combining classical Islamic teachings, behavioral transformation theories, and community-based interventions to address the tension between tradition and modernity in Southeast Asian Muslim contexts (Asni, 2019; Engku Alwi et al., 2014).

In conclusion, this study provides vital insights into how Islamic education functions as a transformative agent, preserving *'aqīdah*, fostering *Sunnah*-aligned praxis, and strengthening Muslim identity amidst complex cultural inheritances. The findings offer a valuable blueprint for similarly situated Muslim communities across the region grappling with the reconciliation of cultural customs and Islamic orthodoxy, underscoring the ongoing necessity for innovative, context-sensitive Islamic pedagogical models that can sustain religious resilience in the face of modernity's challenges.

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