

## **Understanding Deviant Teachings and Its Features Among Muslim Youths: A Case Study of UniKL Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article presents to identify the understanding of deviant teachings and its features among UniKL students, particularly British Malaysian Institute at Gombak, and their opinions towards this issue. This article highlights five features characteristic of deviant teachings by focusing on two of the famous deviant teachings in Malaysia, namely *Ayah Pin* and *Tuhan Harun*. This study used a set of questionnaire that distributed to a number of respondent in order to collect data in this study. The result of this study shown that respondents are well aware on this issue. However, this study also emphasizes that teachers have to prioritize this matter and ensure all students are aware and understand the concept of deviant teaching in order to protect their faith from anything that deviates from the true teachings of Islam.

Keywords: deviant teaching, characteristics of deviant teaching, faith, true teaching of Islam.

## **Kefahaman Ajaran Sesat Dan Ciri-Cirinya Dalam Kalangan Golongan Muda Muslim: Kajian Kes Terhadap Pelajar UniKL**

### **ABSTRAK**

*Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti kefahaman pelajar terhadap ajaran sesat dan ciri-cirinya dalam kalangan para pelajar di Universiti Kuala Lumpur (British Malaysian Institute), Gombak. Kajian ini membincangkan lima ciri ajaran sesat dengan menumpukan kepada dua contoh popular ajaran sesat di Malaysia iaitu ajaran Ayah Pin dan Tuhan Harun. Soalan kaji selidik diedarkan kepada sejumlah responden dalam usaha memperolehi data kajian. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa responden menyedari akan kewujudan ajaran sesat. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian juga menekankan bahawa guru-guru perlu meletakkan keutamaan dalam perkara tersebut dan memastikan para pelajar mempunyai kesedaran dan memahami*

*konsep ajaran sesat supaya mereka dapat memelihara kepercayaan mereka agar tidak terpesong daripada ajaran agama Islam.*

*Kata kunci: ajaran sesat, ciri-ciri ajaran sesat, kepercayaan, ajaran agama Islam yang benar*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Deviant Teachings in Malaysia**

Deviant teachings are a man-made phenomenon that have existed throughout time and across the world. This issue has been discussed by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars across the world. In Malaysia, the emergence of deviant teachings mostly have been influenced by teachings of Isma'ilism, Hindusim, Buddhism and also ancient Greek philosophy. However, heresy among Muslims is due to succumbing to their own desires and for their own purposes. Obviously, most deviant teachings in Malaysia have their own agenda, which is to remove Islamic law, misuse the name of Islam or manipulate the concept of Imam Mahdi, prophethood and the attributes of God (Wan Mohd Azam, 2009).

Previous researchers have documented and opined that heresy in Malaysia is caused by external factors that enable people to believe such untrue teachings. As mentioned above, in Malaysia, many individuals and groups have become involved in deviant teachings after being influenced by the culture and lifestyle of ancient traditions such as animism and dynamism as well as incorporating other doctrines such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Neo-Platonism (Siti Norbaya, 2002). According to Siti Norbaya (2002), Muslims believe in Islam as the one and only true religion from God. Unfortunately, some Muslim groups have mixed the true teachings of Islam (*aqidah*) and Islamic law with teachings of other faiths, such as Judaism and Christianity, to produce new teachings known as "the teaching of Batiniah" .

Deviant teachings or heresy refer to beliefs or practices that are in contrary to Islamic law. Such teachings originate in many ways. Previous studied showed that deviant teachings occurred as a result of misinterpreting Qur'anic verses in order to advocate a group's objectives. In Malaysia, there are 10 known groups promoting deviant teachings through the misinterpretation of Qur'anic verses. According to Ammar (2011), some scholars said that the movements propagating deviant teachings first arrived in Malaysia more than 200 years ago while another suggested that these movements arrived since the emergence of Islam in Malaysia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, much earlier than the earlier suggested date. Most of deviant teachings in Malaysia are based on *taṣṣawwuf wujūdiyyah* and *bāṭiniyyah*, which are influenced by doctrines of Judaism, Neo-Platonism, Platonism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Mazdakism, Hinduism, Buddhism, animism and dynamism (Ammar, 2011).

According to Ammar (2011) Malaysians Muslims are more influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, its remnants of which can be observed in cultural practices rather than religious practices. Before Malaysia gained independence, there was no official Department of Islamic Affairs in each states. Some Muslim preachers propagated Islam in their own manner, which may have paved the way for deviant teachings to occur.

There are many categories or characteristics of deviant teachings in Malaysia; each group in Malaysia have their own teachings and followers. One such characteristic is the recognition of their leader as “the chosen one”, claiming that their leader is the prophet who has been conferred revelation by God. They further believe that there is a prophet after the Prophet Muḥammad, their awaited future leader known as al-Mahdī. They also believe in incarnation of the soul, the power of their leader to help them enter paradise in the hereafter, the compensation of sins with money and the submission of women for sexual purposes (Ku Muhammad Asmadi, 2010).

Besides their deviant teachings, there have been conflicts between deviant groups and authorities in Malaysia. One well known incident occurred with the group known as Four Companions in Kelantan in 1974, leading to the death of one its members. Another incident was the injury of Damanhuri Abdul Wahab caused by Tajul Ariffin, who claimed himself as al-Mahdī.

Newspaper (*Utusan Malaysia*, 2004) stated that deviant teachings in Malaysia is not a new phenomenon; it has been occurring since the emergence of Islam in this area. There are two factors that lead to deviant teachings, which are internal and external factors. Internal factors are influenced by culture and beliefs, such as dynamism and animism, while external factors refer to elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and ancient Greece that affects the faith of Muslims (Mohd Nizam Sahad, 2004).

There are 11 figures who preached deviant teachings during the eras of Prophet Muhammad and the four caliphates. Three figures emerged during the Prophet’s era, which were Al-Aswad from the people of Madlaj, Musailamah al Kazzab from Hanifah, Tulaihah bin Khuwailid from Assad. The remaining deviant figures emerged during the caliphates’ era, especially during the reign of Abu Bakar. They were Uyainah bin Hasan from Fazarah, Qurrah bin Salamah Al-Qusyairi from Ghatafan, Al-Fuja’ah bin Abdul Yahl from Sulayam, Malik bin Nuwairah, Sajah binti Al-Mindhir, Al-Ash’ath bin Qais and Al-Hattam bin Zaid (Majlis Agama Islam Selangor, 2015). The last figure of deviant teachings during the caliphates’ era was Jabalah bin al-Ahyam and this is during Umar al-Khattab’s reign.

## FEATURES OF DEVIANT TEACHINGS

This article will focus on two famous groups of deviant teachings in Malaysia, namely *Tuhan Harun* and *Ayah Pin*. Even though both groups preached the contradict Islamic principles and law, their teachings became further deviant over time.

Most Malaysian Muslims do not understand clearly about the features of certain deviant teachings and why people can be easily influenced by deviant teachings even though they are aware that it is against Islamic teaching. Thus, it is, first and foremost, important to identify the characteristics of deviant teachings. Generally speaking, most deviant teachings in Malaysia are based on five principles that form the primary source of their teachings (Siti Norbaya, 2002). Firstly, they believe all physical things have *batiniyya* as interpreted in the Qur'an. The *batiniyya* method used here neglects the original meaning and, instead, favours the hidden meaning. Then, they use *tasawwuf wahdah al-wujud*, which is also a misinterpretation of Quranic verses to benefit their teachings. Furthermore, they rely on unauthentic *hadith* and, lastly, refer to *dhawq* and *kashaf* as true sources.

According to Siti Norbaya (2002), there are several types of deviant teachings, such as:

1. New teachings based on *Tasawwuf*

The new teachings, as mentioned above, are *Taslim*, *Qaidani* and *Tajalli*. They were invented by people (teachers) with the several of names. *Taslim* is the oldest teaching cult in Malaysia and was established by Ahmad Syafie in the state of Penang in 1872 (Ammar, 2011). According to Ammar (2011), Ahmad Syafie was known later as Ahmad Matahari (*matahari* in Bahasa Melayu means sun) because he has compared the sun with God.

2. *Tarekat*

There are many branches of *tarekat* such as Tarekat Naqsyabandiah, Tarekat Ahmadiyah and Tarekat Qadirun-Yahya because most of their leaders have their own methodology of preaching.

3. Rejection of primary sources

They are more encouraged to use their own reasoning, especially in Qur'anic interpretation, without referring to other authentic sources. An example of such groups is the Anti-Hadith group.

## FEATURES OF DEVIANT TEACHINGS BY AYAH PIN AND TUHAN HARUN

### *Background of Ayah Pin*

The figure Ayah Pin was Ariffin Mohammad and hailed from the state of Terengganu. Ayah Pin was the only son in his family. He married with six women but only four of them remained with him. From his marriages to the four wives, he fathered more than 20 children (Wan Mohd Azam, 2009).

He received his early education in Bachok, Kelantan, and completed his study when he was 10 years old. He did not study Islamic studies formally except for learning one part of the holy al-Qur'an which was known as *Muqaddam* in Malay culture. Ariffin was a student and son-in-

law of Hasan Anak Rimau. Hasan claimed himself as a god and spread his teachings to many disciples. In particular, the teachings of Ayah Pin was heavily influenced by Hasan's teachings of *Zikrullah*.

Eventually, Ayah Pin began preaching his teachings to others. At the same time, he claimed himself as god and the owner of heaven's key. He also claimed to receive revelation from God to change the rules of Islamic law. He declared that he has created a syncretic religion, incorporating Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Thus it was not unusual for him to gain followers of different religious backgrounds.

The teachings of Ayah Pin contained traces of Hinduism; he believed that god can be transformed into an object or human being. Based on statistics, the number of his followers increased between 1970 and 2003. He sought to influence people seeking his treatment. According to one of his followers, Ayah Pin did not teach Islam or other faiths but only performed treatment for those facing spiritual problems by giving advice and without bias towards any religion.

According to Marzuki Yusoff (2005), one of the villagers in Ayah Pin's place revealed that Ayah Pin's teachings was under surveillance because neither he nor his performed prayers and fasting according to Islamic principles and his followers declared him as a god instead of Allah. Following this incident, his followers steadily increased and comprised of individuals of different religions, backgrounds and nationalities. They even included Buddhist monks and Hindu priests.

Ayah Pin's deviant teachings becomes more obvious when he declared that he owned the kingdom of heaven and wanted to show it to his followers through structures that he created. He built the following structures to prove his action for his followers (Wan Mohd Azam, 2009):

- Huge kettle sculpture- to purify water
- Huge vase sculpture- to hold water from the kettle that he believed can heal any disease
- Roundhouse- A meeting hall for Ayah Pin and his followers
- Huge umbrella sculpture- a holy place to remember god

According to Wan Mohd Azam (2009), the following factors proved Ayah Pin's teachings were contradicted to Islam:

- Proclaimed humans as god
- Did not believe in Prophet Muhammad because he was also a man and all problems can be solved with *dhikir*.
- *Dhikir* was more important than the daily five prayers
- Paradise is only for Ayah Pin's followers and he will decide who can enter paradise
- The daily five prayers were not mandatory
- Declared himself as god

### ***Background of Tuhan Harun***

Many articles have highlighted similarities between the teachings of *Ayah Pin* and *Tuhan Harun*. *Tuhan Harun* was associated with Harun bin Mat Saat in Raub, Pahang. He was also called “Ustaz Harun” in his area because he was known as an alternative traditional practitioner and even had his own treatment centre for his patients, namely as *Pusat Rawatan Islam Ar-Redha*.

Harun was known for being extraordinary due to his ability to use his medical to treat and cure illnesses among villagers. Soon, he established several organizations with his followers in the name of Islam. The organizations that were established by Harun including *Kelab Taqwa Malaysia*, *Pan Phoenix Dinar*, *Business Time Dinar*, *Persatuan Gabungan Kebajikan Ekonomi Rakyat Malaysia* (PKEKM), *Yayasan Awana*, *Persatuan Kebajikan Malaysia* (PKEKM), *Kelab Rohani Selangor* (KRS) and *Kelab Ihsan Wilayah Persekutuan* (KIWP) (Kamarudin and Sharafuddin, 2017).

The following are some of the crucial features of *Tuhan Harun*’s deviant teachings:

- The teachings must be kept confidential
- The formation of love
- The incarnation of god in himself
- Declaration of himself as *Imam Mahdi*
- Several unusual allegations
- Extraordinary ability
- Declaration of himself as *Imam Mahdi*
- Several unusual allegations
- Extraordinary ability

Additionally, in order to confirm and strengthen his teachings, the following are a list of 36 texts books and documents related to *Tuhan Harun*’s teaching for his followers:

- *Different Commercial and Sentimental Value of God*
- “*Seminar Pendidikan Tuhan Malala 2013*”
- University Universal Overhead God
- “*Silibus Pendidikan Dan Pengajian Maha Graduan Februari 2013*”
- “*Kalam Tuhan*”
- *Sinopsys God*
- “*Info Rektor*”
- “*Sebelum Tuhan Berada Didepan Mata*”
- “*Maha Graduan Masa Hadapan Tuhan*”
- “*Bila Aku Jadi Tuhan*”
- “*Selamat Datang Ke Dunia Tuhan*”
- “*Pusat Latihan Dunia Tuhan Masa Hadapan*”
- God Important
- “*Tuhan*”
- “*Dunia Tuhan*”
- “*Penterjemahan Tuhan*”

- “Body One Dari Dulu Lagi”
- “Makrifat Sufism”
- “Sembang Secara Skala Rektor”
- Owner And Three twelve
- “Tamadun Ketuhanan Abad Ke 21”
- “Himpunan Segala Cerita Al-Maknun Tuhan”
- “Fenomena Bersama Tuhan”
- “Faktasifik”
- “Bacalah Wahai Kekasihku”
- “Rahsia Kejayaan Tuhan”
- “Tuhan 2013”
- “Kategori Dan Sinopsis 1, 2, 3 Zat Sifat dan Jasad”
- God Friends
- Carry And Present
- “Ketuhanan dan Kemanusiaan”
- “Revolusi dan Ketuhanan”
- “Bedah Siasat Fizikal dan Spritual Tuhan”
- “Sejauhmana Manusia Mampu Menerokai Tuhan”
- “Manusia Adalah Teknologi Terbaik Tuhan”
- “Tesis “History God” tulisan Dr. Hassan bin Harun (Doktor Maha Graduan Tuhan)”

Based on the above works, there are numerous topics in his works that deviate from Islamic teachings. Most of his works encourage laymen and researchers to further read on the details of his writings. For example, *Maha Graduan Masa Hadapan Tuhan* highlights the essence of god according to him and his followers:

*Dahulu mustahil bagi kita kenal tuhan, tetapi sekarang ini, tidak mustahil pula bagi kita untuk mengenali zat Tuhan ini kerana kita telah pun mengenali tuhan. Megenal Tuhan adalah titik segala jawapan, mengenal zat adalah titik segala permulaanke masa hadapan. Tiada rahsia lagi antara kita. Wahai jalur lebar semua, nama aku Harun, pangkat aku Tuhan, zat aku berteknologi.* (Kamarudin and Sharafuddin, 2017).

Moreover, another book by Harun also stresses on the essence of god. According to him, the essence of god is divided into three types, namely wisdom, power and leadership. In this book, he mentions clearly that the success of god (himself) must through four processes, known as photosynthesis. The first process is *Zat-Hayah Qadim (Hayah Mutlak)*, followed by the second process of power, the third process of body and the final process of "Body one" that can change or transform himself to become another person called “Ustaz Harun”, “Tengku Harun”, “Tuhan Harun” and “Zat Harun”.

Another interesting work by Tuhan Harun that prompted further research was the book *Kalam Tuhan*. Based on this work, Harun and his followers have attained the status of god. The most important finding of this book is that Harun states that he and his followers were born to become gods and live in this world to protect it from any harm caused by humans.

In order to further disseminate his teachings and attract people to become his followers, Harun also composed songs about his teachings, most of which were related to spirituality and goodness. Most of his songs were sung by many famous artists in Malaysia. Harun also confessed that he has his own studio in which he produced about 300 songs.

**DATA ANALYSIS OF UNIKL STUDENTS’ UNDERSTANDING OF DEVIANT TEACHINGS**

For this study, data was collected from students of UniKL BMI using questionnaire survey. The final data used completed surveys from 41 students, most of whom were final-year students, followed by several first-year and second-year students. Furthermore, the identity of the respondents were not taken to maintain confidentiality.

**Background of Respondents**

Table 1: Numbers of respondents by gender

No	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	30	73.2
2	Female	11	26.8
	Total	41	100.00

Table 1 shows that the total number of male respondents was 30 (73 percent) while the total number of female respondents was 11 (26 percent). Although the respondents were randomly selected by the researcher, it is shown that the number of male respondents is much higher than the female respondents.

***Pre-college Education of Respondents***

Table 2: Pre-college Education of Respondents

No	Pre-college Education	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Islamic School	12	29.2
2	Non-Islamic School	29	70.8
	Total	41	100.00

Table 2 shows that the percentage of students from non-Islamic school is higher than Islamic school. The number of students from Islamic school was only 12 (29.2 percent) compared to 29 (70.8 percent) students from non-Islamic school.



### Respondents' Understanding of Deviant Teachings

Table 3 displays the findings of respondents about the concept of deviant teachings. There were 20 questions about the understanding of Islamic teachings (*aqidah*). Table 3 only shows 10 out of the total 20 questions because they provide enough evidence of the understanding of deviant teachings among students.

Table 3: Findings of Selected 10 Questions by Respondents

No	Item	Frequency & Percentage				Mean
		Strongly Agree	Disagree	Natural	Agree	
1	I wish to meet a great person who can solve my problem and can promise happiness with his mercy.	14 (34.1%)	4 (9.8%)	5 (12.2%)	18 (43.9%)	2.66
2	A knowledgeable person in religion can guarantee one's place in <i>Jannah</i> (hereafter).	1 (2.4%)	28 (68.3%)	7 (17.1%)	5 (12.2%)	2.39
3	Revelation can still be conveyed by Allah to a chosen person after Prophet Muhammad.	-	34 (82.9%)	2 (4.9%)	5 (12.2%)	2.29
4	The position of a chosen person can be parallel to a prophet.	1 (2.4%)	37 (90.2%)	3 (7.3%)	-	2.05
5	A chosen person can guarantee purification from sin.	1 (2.4%)	39 (95.1%)	1 (2.4%)	-	2.00
6	The true teachings of Islam is only from Prophet Muhammad.	28 (68.3%)	3 (7.3%)	1 (2.4%)	9 (22.0%)	1.78
7	Only God knows what will happen in our present and future.	36 (87.8%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)	3 (7.3%)	1.29
8	Muslims believe in Qada' and Qadar as part of their Islamic faith.	28 (68.3%)	3 (7.3%)	3 (7.3%)	7 (17.1%)	1.73
9	Performing prayers will bring us closer to God.	33 (80.5%)	1 (2.4%)	2 (4.9%)	5 (12.2%)	1.49

10	There are no one who is most powerful except God.	30 (73.2%)	6 (14.6%)	1 (2.4%)	4 (9.8%)	1.49
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This data above shows the minimum overall understanding of deviant teachings is in the average level, which is 2.66. This means that students are alert about the concept of deviant teachings.

The findings of the first question shows that there are only 14 (9.8 percent) students who disagrees with the statement while the remaining agreed. This proves that some students in this university have some confusion over this notion.

In Malaysia, while deviant teachings is not unusual, they are always identified early by people who are aware. Therefore, it is expected that for the second question, 28 (68.3 percent) students disagreed with that statement, which is a high figure. In spite of this question, in Islamic principles, Muslims already know that only Allah can judge us and guarantee's our place in the hereafter.

The influences of deviant teachings can easily spread far and wide from one person to another. On the contrary, revelation only can be conveyed by Allah to his prophets, who are marked the seal of the prophet. Therefore, the percentage of clear understanding of revelation among students is high; 34 (82.9 percent) disagreed about revelation conveyed after Prophet Muhammad.

Furthermore, deviant teachings always position their leaders or chosen ones to parallel with the prophet. However, the data above shows that 37 (90.2 percent) students disagreed with the statement and only four (9.8%) were unsure about this. Therefore, nowadays, Muslims are more alert with any situation related with *aqidah*.

The fifth statement is on a chosen person being able to guarantee purification from sin. Muslims believe that there is no greater entity besides Allah, who can either accept or reject our repentance of sin. The understanding of students about this statement is high; 39 (95.1 percent) students disagreed that a chosen person can guarantee purification from sin.

The following statement relates to students' understanding of the true teachings of Islam. 37 (90.3 percent) students either strongly agreed or agreed that the true teachings of Islam came only from Prophet Muhammad, although four students did not realize this. The seventh statement mentions that only God knows what will happen in our present and future. The findings above show that 39 (95.1%) students either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Therefore, it is clear that students know their responsibility as vicegerents of Allah and place their complete trust in Allah. Muslims may commit to performing their best in this life but it is Allah who decides everything.

When discussing the present and future, Muslims believe *Qada'* and *Qadar* as part of Islam. Some Muslims are not clear on the concept of *Qada'* and *Qadar*. Therefore, if anything happens to them, they either cannot accept it or blame their fate on others. For this statement, 35 (85.4 percent) students know of the concept of *Qada'* and *Qadar* while six (14.6 percent) students did not understand this concept.

Performing prayers strengthens faith and brings Muslims closer to God. The data shows that 38 (92.7 percent) students agreed with this statement. There are usually no lectures during the prayer time, which allows them the time needed to pray in the mosque and be close to God. The last data analysis shows that 34 (83 percent) students agreed that there is no entity more powerful in this world besides God. This belief is mentioned in both the Qur'an and Hadith and is accepted by all Muslims.

## CONCLUSION

In Malaysia, the phenomenon of deviant teachings is a very serious problem from the Islamic perspective. It involves questioning faith, which determines a man's status in Islam, whether he is still a Muslim or otherwise. Deviant teachings is taught as part of the national education syllabus of Islamic studies subject.

The widespread of deviant teaching is due to several factors. The first factor is weak faith, which easily leads to searching for new teachings. Some people tend to follow blindly without first investigating new teachings. Moreover, faith rehabilitation centres do not exist in every state in Malaysia. The lack of cooperation between Muslim communities and religious authorities also leads to deviant teachings. Therefore, the authorities should mobilize forces to enhance public awareness of the importance of preserving the sanctity of Islam.

In UniKL, it is important for teachers to prioritize this matter and ensure that all students are aware and understand the concept of deviant teaching in order to protect their faith from anything that deviates from the true teachings of Islam. Religious institutions can also play a role in curbing deviant teachings. For example, mosque committees, village committees and parents should educate their youngsters to be familiar with the Islamic education taught in mosques and *musollah* in order to strengthen their faith and encourage them to attend religious activities held in their area.

To conclude, it is important for young Muslims to learn about the dangers of deviant teachings at school to preserve their faith and belief. Teachers must have sufficient knowledge and use various approaches to engage with students on this matter. This knowledge would equip them to better protect themselves from any wrong teachings that contradict with Islamic principles.

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