A STUDY ON ICT IN FATWA MANAGEMENT IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports a study of the usage of information communication and technology (ICT) in fatwa management at Mufti departments in Malaysia. For this research ICT is the term used to explain the usage of technology such as computer to manipulate data for the purpose of disseminations and communications. The usage of ICT was studied based on four basic operations that are input, process, output and storage. This research also identifies the factors that limit the ICT usage in fatwa management. The data were collected through interviews and survey at Mufti departments in Malaysia. The outcome of this research shows that generally ICT is being used in fatwa management at Mufti departments in Malaysia and specifically the ICT is more applied for storage purposes. Nevertheless the technologies and infrastructures available are limited. This research also reveals that the usage of ICT does help in managing fatwa efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the Muslim community.

INTRODUCTION

The usage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) cannot be denied any more in this millennium. The ICT itself has been widely used in many management processes in Malaysia, which include government sectors, education, business, and trading. ICT is capable of generating economic growth and will keep on expanding.

One of the targets is to create an additional 100,000 high value added jobs to the existing 20,000 in Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC)[1]. With the help of ICT, the management processes have become more efficient and effective.

An example of management process is fatwa management. Fatwa according to *Kamus Dewan* is a decision of religious laws (that has not been decided yet) made by referring to Al-Quran, hadith and other sources of laws, including the Mufti's ijthihad (Dewan Bahasa Pustaka, 2003). According to Mu'jam Al-Arabi Al-Asasi, the plural of fatwa is fatawa which means the answer to Syariyah or legislative matters which incline to the Mufti or the chairman of Fatwa Council or the Scholars (Mu'jam Al-Arabi Al-Asasi).

Fatwa is a unique process in Islamic legislative. It involves two parties: a party will ask or provide the questions known as Mustafti' and another will give the answers and response called Mufti (Mohd Daud Bakar, 1997). Literally fatwa means giving answers or explanations about religious problems. Technically it means explanations of Syariyah' law by Mufti for certain religious problems based on the Syariyah' proof as the answer to those who ask either individual or group.

Based on the definitions given it is clearly shown that fatwa involves several parties that are the people who ask and the people who answers all of the questions that related to the religion matter and relevant current issues. Begin with one question or problem, then the authorized party will make a research about the problem and justify whether that matters need to be gazetted with fatwa or not. If the problem needs fatwa then a further research will be carried out to investigate the problem and to find the solution. A meeting will be organized and attended by Mufti and the appointed committee members to discuss the problem that was brought up to them. Allah SWT has said in surah an-Nahl 16:43 which interpretation is:

"A*nd also before you the messengers that We sent were only men, to whom We gave (teachings by) Inspiration; If you do not realize this, Ask of those who possess the Message."*

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[1] The 2005 budget speech by YAB Dato'Seri Abdullah Bin Hj. Ahmad Badawi. http://www.ids.org.my/goverment/speeches/fedbudget/05budget.

From the above verse, it is clear that Allah SWT exclaims to mankind to ask for the expers since not everyone is born knowledgeable in every matter and that is a gift from Allah to his slaves who have mind and knowledge.

Currently there are 14 Mufti Departments to manage the related fatwa issues for each 13 states and federal territories in Malaysia. Each Mufti Department has several administrative staff to manage the fatwa management and a committee who will decide a fatwa. Committees from different states are moderated by National Fatwa Council Committees, are responsible for managing all fatwas that have been gazetted by each state and federal territory.

Managing fatwa is considered a very challenging task since it is one of the valid and trustable guidances after the Quran and Sunnah (main sources of Islamic knowledge) for Muslim, not only in Malaysia specifically, but also to other Muslims throughout the world. Fatwa is a ruling on a point of Islamic law that is given by a recognized authority[2]. In Malaysia managing fatwa refers to the ways of keeping the fatwa for the purpose of accessing and disseminating. Therefore, a good management system is needed in order to provide the essential source about issues in Islam and also to preserve the accuracy of the information received by the Muslims.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Fatwa has become another resource to the Muslim as it explains and solves Muslims uncertainties toward certain issues. However some Muslims are not aware of some fatwas that had been decided or gazetted. They are still debating issues or problems which had already been solved and released many years ago. This happened due to not many people realized that the solution is ready for them. Consequently, some may choose what they prefer and suit their lifestyle without consulting the fatwa.

The fatwa management process in Malaysia has been invisible since not all Muslims know on how it is being gazetted and disseminated to the Muslims. The management also seems to be different from one state to another. For example some states use Internet as alternative way to promulgate the information about fatwa but others do not. Even

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[2] http://www.hyperdictionary.com

the usage of ICT as tools to enhance the management process also varies for each state.

The management processes involves four main tasks, information gathering, decision-making information, disseminating, maintaining and storing process of the fatwa. Since there is lack of research on ICT usage on fatwa management, therefore, it is important to learn and understand the management of fatwa and identify whether the ICT is being used in enhancing the management process in Malaysia.

In this research, certain issues were addressed such as: how much ICT is being used in fatwa management process? Does it cover the entire four main tasks: gathering, processing, disseminating and storing? Does the ICT help the purpose of keeping, accessing and disseminating? What are the benefits and limitations in pursuing ICT in the fatwa management at each Mufti Department?

RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this research was firstly, to get a better view on how fatwa is being managed in Malaysia. Secondly the aim is to identify whether the ICT is being used in managing fatwa. It is important to understand the usage of ICT in managing fatwa in each state because it may help in coordinating the 14 Mufti State Departments and at the same time to plan a suitable system for fatwa management in Malaysia. The result of this research can help others who need information about the ICT usage in fatwa management in Malaysia.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research were as follows:

1. To identify whether the ICT is used in fatwa management in the 14 Mufti State Departments in Malaysia.
2. To identify how the ICT are used in Mufti Departments according to activities input, process, output and storage.
3. To identify the factors that limit the ICT usage in the Mufti Departments.
4. To recognize whether the ICT has helped the management process in Mufti Departments.

METHODOLOGY

This research covered 14 Mufti Departments throughout Malaysia. There is a small number of staff for each Mufti Departments and the number varies. Since the population is equal to the sample or the population is small, therefore, the whole population of staff in the department was selected as the sample for this study. Nevertheless, the information from Sabah was not included because Mufti Department of Sabah was not ready to accept any research activity during the time this research was carried out.

The data was collected by using two instruments; survey and interview. These instruments were chosen because they are the appropriate methods of finding the information on the usage of ICT in fatwa management at Mufti Department throughout Malaysia. The respondents involved were those who were working at Mufti Department.

25 sets of questionnaires were distributed to the 13 Mufti Departments. The respondents were those who have job tasks that are related to fatwa either or indirectly. The interview session was held with the officer in charge of fatwa for each state.

This research is based on that current situation and used descriptive statistic in order to explain the findings. The information was displayed in frequency in order to show the percentage of the data. The information was being analyzed by using the cross tabs in order to show in detail the usage in every state.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The main purpose of this research was to examine the usage of ICT in fatwa management in each Mufti Department in Malaysia. The findings discussed were based on the analyses of data collected via questionnaires and interviews. The analyses include respondent's profiles, identifying ICT usage in fatwa management, the usage of ICT in fatwa management according to the four main activities, problems that limits the ICT usage and the recognition whether or not ICT had helped in the fatwa management.

Respondents' Profile

Based on the pilot survey, the number of staff at each Mufti Department in Malaysia was acquired. The number of staff varies for each Mufti departments. The highest number of staff in Mufti Department is 25 people including the Mufti himself. From the questionnaires distributed about 58% of the staff had responded and returned the questionnaires to the researchers.

Concurrent to 188 questionnaires collected, 65.4% of the respondents were male and 34.6% were female. The majority of the respondents were from Terengganu and the least were from Kedah.

The staff age varies for each department. Throughout Malaysia 9% of the is staff in the age range of 18-24, 41.5% in the age range of 25-34, 24.5% in the of age range of 35-44 and 25% of staff in the age range of 45 and above. Therefore the highest percentage of staff age is in the range of 25-34 years old. Nonetheless, if Pahang and Terengganu, have more staff from the age group of 35–44. Therefore, the analyses show that the staff age highly varies thus, will lead to multiple group of acceptance in technology usage.

TABLE 1: The total number of staffs at Mufti Department of Malaysia that are based on gender

A1	Gender			
	Male		Female	
States	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Johore	8	61.5%	5	38.5%
Kedah	1	33.3%	2	66.7%
Kelantan	10	62.5%	16	37.5%
Malacca	13	59.1%	9	40.9%
Negeri Sembilan	11	68.8%	5	31.3%
Pahang	17	73.9%	6	26.1%
Penang	8	80%	2	20%
Perak	12	70.6%	5	29.4%
Perlis	6	66.7%	3	33.3%

Selangor	9	69.2%	4	30.8%
Terengganu	17	68%	8	32%
Sarawak	3	37.5%	5	62.5%
Wilayah Persekutuan	8	61.5%	5	38.5%
TOTAL	**123**	**65.4%**	**65**	**34.6%**

The respondents are from four types of work positions which are Management and Professional, Officer, Support Staff and others. Overall, the analyses show that support staff is the highest with 42%, 23.4% are officer, 22.3% are management and professional and 12.2% are others.

Identifying ICT Usage in Fatwa Management
The first objective of this research was to identify whether the Mufti Departments have used ICT to manage the fatwa. According to the survey, 80.9% of the respondents agreed that their department uses ICT to manage the fatwa and only 19.1% of the respondents answered as "No". This shows that ICT does play important roles in managing the fatwa in Malaysia. The details for usage of ICT at Mufti Department for every state are shown in Table 2. The analyses reveal that those who answered "No" were those with job task are not using or related to ICT equipments.

TABLE 2: The usage of ICT at State Mufti Departments throughout Malaysia

States	Using ICT			
	Yes		**No**	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Johore	9	69.2%	4	30.8%
Kedah	3	100%	0	0
Kelantan	16	100%	0	0
Malacca	20	90.9%	2	9.1%

Negeri Sembilan	11	68.8%	5	31.3%
Pahang	14	60.9%	9	39.1%
Penang	9	90%	1	10%
Perak	16	94.1%	1	5.9%
Perlis	9	100%	0	0
Selangor	13	100%	0	0
Terengganu	23	92%	2	8%
Sarawak	5	62.5%	3	37.5%
Wilayah Persekutuan	4	30.8%	9	69.2%
TOTAL	**152**	**80.9%**	**36**	**19.1%**

Although the departments have used the ICT, most of the job tasks of the staffs are indirectly related to fatwa management. This mean that, any task that are about fatwa management are not the main task for most of the staff. As shown in Table 3, 79.8% of the staff has job tasks that are indirectly related, 19.7% of the staffs has job tasks that are directly related, and 0.5% of the staffs have job task that are not related to fatwa management.

TABLE 3: Job tasks that related to fatwa management

States	Job tasks that related to fatwa management					
	Directly		**Indirectly**		**No**	
	Frequency	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
Johore	5	38.5%	7	53.8%	1	7.7%
Kedah	3	100%	3	100%	0	0
Kelantan	8	50%	8	50%	0	0
Malacca	3	13.6%	19	86.4%	0	0
N.Sembilan	3	18.8%	13	81.3%	0	0
Pahang	7	30.4%	16	69.6%	0	0

Penang	1	10%	9	90%	0	0
Perak	4	23.5%	13	76.5%	0	0
Perlis	1	11.1%	8	88.9%	0	0
Selangor	1	7.7%	11	84.6%	1	7.7%
Terengganu	4	16%	21	84%	0	0
Sarawak	2	25%	6	75%	0	0
W.Persekutuan	3	23.1%	10	76.9%	0	0
TOTAL	**37**	**19.7%**	**150**	**79.8%**	**1**	**0.5%**

Table 4 shows that majority 79.8% of the staffs at Mufti Department has knowledge and skills about ICT. Therefore, this indicates that most of the staff at Mufti Department are ICT literate.

The conclusion for the first objective of this research is Mufti Department in Malaysia does use ICT to manage fatwa. However, most of the staff in the department has job tasks that are indirectly related to fatwa management and they are ICT literate.

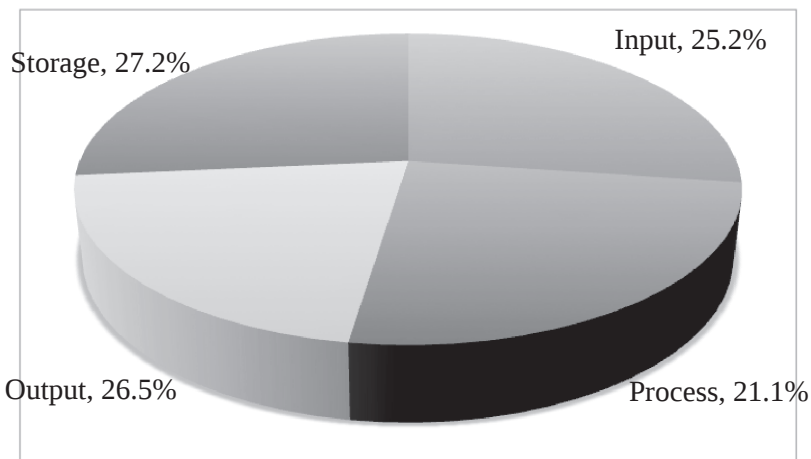**TABLE 4:** Level of ICT knowledge and skills at State Mufti Departments in Malaysia

States	Level of ICT knowledge and skills					
	No		Knowledgeable and skillful		Very knowledgeable and skillful	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Johore	0	0	13	100%	0	0
Kedah	0	0	3	100%	0	0
Kelantan	8	50%	8	50%	0	0
Malacca	3	13.6%	19	86.4%	0	0
N.Sembilan	3	18.8%	13	81.3%	0	0

Pahang	7	30.4%	16	69.6%	0	0
Penang	1	10%	9	90%	0	0
Perak	4	23.5%	13	76.5%	0	0
Perlis	1	11.1%	8	88.9%	0	0
Selangor	1	7.7%	11	84.6%	1	7.7%
Terengganu	4	16%	21	84%	0	0
Sarawak	2	25%	6	75%	0	0
W.Persekutuan	3	23.1%	10	76.9%	0	0
TOTAL	**37**	**19.7%**	**150**	**79.8%**	**1**	**0.5%**

The Usage of ICT in Fatwa Management According To the 4 Main Activities

The second objective of this research was identify ICT usage in managing the fatwas. Based on the information system cycles that are *input, process, output,* and *storage*. *Input* is the process of collecting the information before it becomes a fatwa, *process* is the action of analyzing the information, *output* is the process of dissemination of the fatwa, and *storage* is the process of keeping the fatwa.

FIGURE 1: Respondents for ICT Usage

According to Figure 1 and Table 4, 27.2% of the Mufti Departments used ICT for the purpose of *storage*, followed by *output* 26.5%, *input* 25.2% and *process* 21.1%. The differences between each component are small. It shows that ICT usage is equally important in all information system cycles. This also shows that the departments are more focus on *storage* because the fatwa is being used as reference for the people at any time. Therefore, the availability of the fatwa is important when it is needed.

Nevertheless, the *output* is also important in order to make people aware of the availability of fatwa. Comparable to *input*, it is used to gather all the information that can be utilized to produce a fatwa. Although the *process* resulted is the last of the four cycles, the ICT is still being employed to process the information gathered in order to produce a fatwa.

As a conclusion, for the second objective, the usage of ICT at Mufti Department is more on *storage*, followed by *output*, *input*, and *process*. Table 4 shows the details for each state.

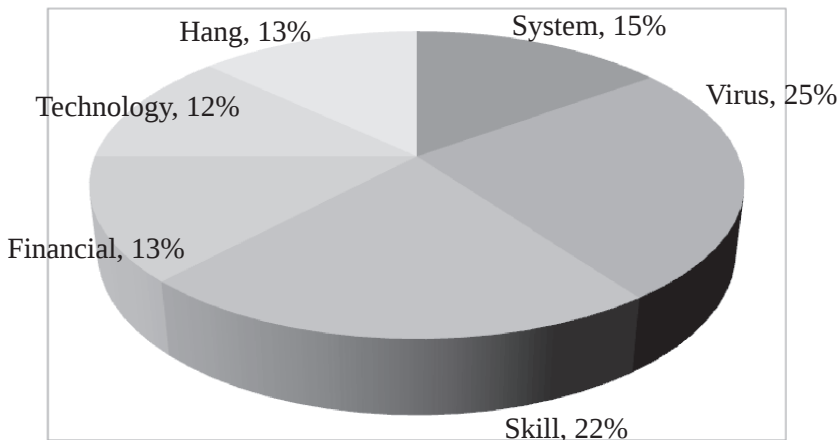**TABLE 4:** The reasons of ICT usage of State Mufti Departments in Malaysia

States	Reasons of ICT usage							
	Input		Process		Output		Storage	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Johore	7	7.1%	5	6%	2	1.9%	3	2.8%
Kedah	2	2%	3	3.7%	2	1.9%	3	2.8%
Kelantan	7	7.1%	14	16.9%	8	7.7%	8	7.5%
Malacca	14	14.1%	11	13.3%	16	15.4%	15	14%
N.Sembilan	5	5.1%	2	2.4%	7	6.7%	5	4.7%
Pahang	15	15.2%	6	7.2%	7	6.7%	8	7.5%
Penang	5	5.1%	5	6%	7	6.7%	7	6.5%
Perak	10	10.1%	8	9.6%	12	11.5%	12	11.2%
Perlis	2	2%	2	2.4%	6	5.9%	7	6.5%

Selangor	7	7.1%	8	9.6%	13	12.5%	11	10.3%
Terengganu	17	17%	12	14.5%	18	17.3%	20	18.7%
Sarawak	5	5.1%	5	6%	3	2.9%	5	4.7%
W. Persekutuan	3	3%	2	2.4%	3	2.9%	3	2.8%
TOTAL	**99**	**25.2%**	**83**	**21.1%**	**104**	**26.5%**	**107**	**27.2%**

Problems That Limits the ICT Usage

Problems can never be avoided while using the ICT. Either big or small, it still can become the obstacles users. As shown in Figure 2, most of the problems faced by the departments is virus attack. Due to this, most of the files were affected. This will delay the action of decision-making and disseminating.

FIGURE 2: The problems faced by the respondents while using the ICT

Lack of skills becomes the second obstacles. The result shows that most of the staffs is skillful and knowledgeable nevertheless specific skills are still lacking. From the interview sessions, the specific skills that most of the departments need are the skills on system administration, website design, and database management. The person as well must know how to overcome the technical problems.
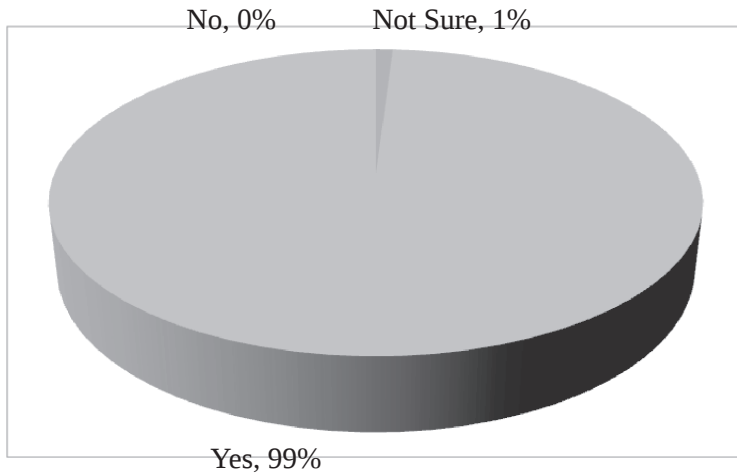
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No standard system for fatwa management has become the next problem for the departments. Mufti Department handles many tasks including fatwa management. Since fatwa is being created based on the need and demand, therefore, not all departments have a specific unit and people just to focus on the management of fatwa.

Besides the problems that have been mentioned above are the computer malfunction other problems that the departments are faced with one, fast changes of technology, and financial problems.

As a conclusion for the third objective, computer virus is the major problem that the department encounters which makes it worst because there are lack of staff that has specific skills that can solve the problem.

Recognition Whether ICT Has Helped In The Fatwa Management.

FIGURE 3: Opinion whether ICT usage does help the management of fatwa

Overall, from Figure 3, 99% of the respondents agreed that ICT does help the Mufti Department to manage the fatwa. This can be seen from the type and the purpose of the usage. Thus, an improvement on the management in term of the system and people may lead to a better performance of the department.

From the analyses of data collected during the research, all of the objectives were achieved. The main aim of this research was to

accomplish the ICT that could be identified as to have been used in fatwa management in Malaysia. Based on the finding, most of the staff is ICT literate, although most of them have job tasks that are indirectly related to fatwa management. This shows that Mufti Department uses ICT in all tasks especially to prepare the minutes of the meeting and working papers. The technology and infrastructure currently used are limited but they are relevant to the four main usages which are input, process, output and storage. The main usage of ICT in managing the fatwa is storage then followed by output, input, and process; storage used for future references, output used for dissemination, input used to update new fatwa. Apart from that, the management uses computer the most to prepare documents and for communication purposes; they correspond by phone, mail, fax, Internet, instant messaging, and specific system. The main problem regarding the ICT that the respondents encountered is the computer virus. The respondents also agreed that the ICT has helped the management process in the Mufti Departments.

CONCLUSION

From the research findings, all Mufti departments have started using the ICT as a tool in managing fatwa. However, the implementation or usage is quite limited based on the technology and infrastructure available at the respective departments. Therefore, it is important to set a standard application system at every Mufti Department so that Muslim especially in Malaysian can have a standardized information about this matter and also to give a conducive environment to the staff so they can manage the fatwa efficiently and effectively.

Some recommendations to enhance the usage of ICT are;
- Offer specific ICT training to staff in order to increase the literacy and awareness. This can increase the knowledge and enable the exchange of information. Some problems occur due to human error, thus knowledge can minimize the human error.
- More personnel with specific skills in IT are needed at Mufti departments. They can handle the technical problems that are related to the computers. It is very useful if Mufti departments can set a budget in setting up an IT unit to handle the ICT task.
- Develop a standard application system to manage fatwa at every Mufti Departments. The application system can enhance

the activities at Mufti departments for communications and exchanges of information. Currently, they are using the custom made software to manage the fatwa process.

- Besides using a printed media, the department is recommended to use ICT to promulgate the fatwa. They should also set up a website as a medium of interaction and communication between the mufti and Muslim around Malaysia.

Basically, information about basic ICT equipment and the necessities of ICT are already acknowledged from this research. Therefore, further research on suitable application system for fatwa management should be conducted. The application system should be developed based on the needs and also the workflow of the staff at Mufti departments purposely for fatwa management. Hence, the redundancy of the process in fatwa management could be minimized.

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