

## Conference Paper

# Application of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) in Identifying the Components of the Islamic Affairs Index Instrument

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**Abstract.**

The establishment of the Islamic Affairs administration has been a significant driving force behind the advancement of Islam and the Muslim community in Malaysia. To enhance religious comprehension within this community, the administration has implemented diverse programs and policies aimed at this objective. Despite the multitude of initiatives, the effectiveness of the Islamic Affairs administration's execution of these programs and policies remains inadequately understood. Given this context, it has become imperative to closely monitor the ongoing performance of Islamic affairs to ensure the continuous growth and prosperity of Islam and the Muslim community. Consequently, this study endeavors to pinpoint the crucial constituents of the Islamic affairs index tool. Employing the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) method, the study engaged nine Islamic religious officers through purposive sampling. The findings of this research have identified eleven primary components that warrant inclusion in the Islamic affairs index instrument. This catalog of components can serve as a robust foundation for assessing the present efficacy of Islamic affairs. Consequently, the Islamic Affairs administration can systematically evaluate the impact of the programs and policies implemented within the Muslim community, thereby fostering a more informed decision-making process.

**Keywords:** Islamic affairs, index instrument, components, nominal group technique, Malaysia

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past three decades, since Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamed (1981-2003), came to power, elements of Islam have become increasingly integrated into the government's system and have become more entrenched in public discourse (Adnan, Siddiquee, & Baulderstone, 2016). The elements of Islam have been incorporated into Malaysia's administrative, educational, financial, and legal systems. This has significantly contributed to the development of Islamic affairs in Malaysia. Islam has made a great contribution to the development of Malaysian society in terms of spirituality and physical (Bakar, Zakaria, & Salleh, 2016), and indirectly it can have a significant impact on Muslim behaviour (Ahmed, Arshad, Mahmood, & Akhtar, 2019). As such, it is important to emphasise that for many Muslims, Islam is about the way of life, and they adopt and practice Islamic beliefs and practices as a way of life (Van Buren III, Syed, & Mir, 2020).

Although the Malaysian government has consistently integrated Islamization into many existing sectors (Kasim & Hoesni, 2021), several issues related to Islamic affairs have arisen in recent years. Based on previous studies, there are several issues connected to Islamic affairs, among them are fake halal stamps and certificates (Ariffin, Riza, Hamid, Awae, & Nasir, 2021; Kamarulzaman, Muhamad, & Nawi, 2021), applications among converts to leave Islam and return to their original religion (Al-Qudsy & Hamidi, 2022), inefficient collection and distribution of zakat (Noor-Kaziemah, Rozaidy, Noordin, Mail, & Ab Fatah, 2021), increasing divorce rates (Abd Kadir, 2021), and weaknesses in financial management and personality of mosque officials and imams (Jusoh, Jamaludin, & Samah, 2022). The issue of Islamic affairs is indeed worrying because it can negatively impact the Muslim community and, in turn, negatively impact the development of Islam in Malaysia (Kassim & Hazmi, 2018).

In addition, since all these issues impact the sphere of Islamic affairs, all these issues should not be addressed separately. This would be less effective if these issues were not addressed holistically, as they are interconnected. According to Rambli, Alwi, and Shamsuddin (2021), in order to enhance Muslims' understanding of Islamic teachings in various dimensions, Islamic institutions and non-governmental organisations have conducted scientific and outreach programs, including symposiums, seminars, forums, and workshops. Although many efforts have been implemented in the context of Islamic affairs, little is known about the performance of Islamic affairs as they have not been holistically evaluated. All these efforts should be framed within the context of a comprehensive evaluation system to provide a clear and measurable strategy

for success. However, the lack of a constructive and transparent assessment tool will compromise the visions and planning of Islamic institutions due to their inability to track the performance of Islamic affairs. As a result, it is difficult to address existing issues in the Muslim community.

In response to this, there is a need to develop an index instrument to evaluate the current performance of Islamic affairs. However, there is a wide gap in the literature on index studies focusing on Islamic affairs. Past studies on the Islamic indices are largely concentrated on Islamic human development (Anto, 2009; Aydin, 2017; Humayon, 2004; Rama & Yusuf, 2019), Islamic economic development (Kanbir & Dikkaya, 2021; Rehman & Askari, 2010; Syed Ali & Hasan, 2014), and human well-being (S. S. Ali & Hasan, 2018; D. A.-F. Batchelor, 2021; D. A. Batchelor, 2013; Sarkawi, Abdullah, Abdullah, & Khazani, 2017). Although these indices are comprehensive and effective in assessing economic and human development, they are still inappropriate for assessing Islamic affairs. Thus, to address this gap, this current study aims to identify pertinent components to be included in the Islamic affairs index instrument.

## 2. Research Methodology

This current study applied the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) as the main method to identify the pertinent components to be included in the Islamic affairs index instrument. NGT is one of the most commonly used formal methods of consensus development (Gallagher, Hares, Spencer, Bradshaw, & Webb, 1993). This method was developed by Delbecq and Van de Ven in 1968 (Manera, Hanson, Gutman, & Tong, 2019). The NGT uses a process similar to structured brainstorming that leverages participants' feelings, skills, and experience (Srivastava, Satsangi, & Satsangee, 2019). A nominal group process is a structured meeting intended to provide an orderly procedure for obtaining qualitative information from participants who have experience with the research (Van de Ven & Delbecq, 1972). In addition, a nominal group consists of a group of stakeholders in the research being conducted who work independently and ultimately agree with each other in identifying and ranking the components (Patra & Lenka, 2020).

Furthermore, the NGT method was selected as it encourages the active involvement of all group members to generate new ideas through a brainstorming format (Salajegheh, Gandomkar, Mirzazadeh, & Sandars, 2020). The strength of the NGT is that it allows participants to identify a specific topic that requires further investigation and to draw attention to topics that may not have been previously unidentified (Olsen, 2019). NGT collects ideas by requesting all participants to respond to questions

posed by a facilitator. Subsequently, participants were asked to rank the ideas and make suggestions on the research being investigated. A facilitator is an individual who oversees the entire NGT process and helps participants to reach a consensus on the proposed components (Patra & Lenka, 2020). In order to conduct this method, NGT allows participants to identify, rank, and evaluate the components without the interference of unbalanced involvement (Olsen, 2019). This process prevents one person from dominating the entire discussion and encourages all participants to contribute ideas to the study.

## 2.1. Sample of the Study

This study used a purposive sampling technique to involve nine Islamic religious officers from an Islamic affairs institution. According to Van De and Delbecq (1971), the sample for using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) should not exceed five to nine participants, but large groups between nine and more than 200 participants can be accommodated in this method. The selection of Islamic religious officials as participants in this study is because they have been directly involved in the management of Islamic affairs. They can generate ideas for developing an index instrument based on their position as Islamic religious officers with knowledge and experience in Islamic affairs.

## 2.2. Procedure and Data Analysis

This study was conducted through a workshop mode that gathers all the participants in one venue. Prior to that, ten participants were invited through e-mail, but only nine were confirmed to participate in this study. The workshop mode provided the ability to interactively collect and analyse data continuously (Srivastava et al., 2019). This allows the participants to focus on the research being investigated. Therefore, the five steps to conduct NGT are as follows:

### 2.2.1. Step 1: Describe the Research

The workshop session was started by the facilitator by: (i) welcoming all the participants; (ii) explaining the background of the study, the purpose of the study, and the study method; (iii) introducing each participant; (iv) explaining the procedures on the NGT process and the responsibilities of each study participant; and (v) explaining the desired outcomes from the workshop (Ahmad, Hussin, Yusof, & Jamil, 2018).

### 2.2.2. Step 2: Silent Generation Idea

All participants were asked to generate ideas silently and individually on a specific topic. Before that, participants were given a marker pen and some sticky notes. Participants were asked to write down all relevant ideas related to the components of Islamic affairs on sticky notes based on their knowledge and experience in their respective fields.

### 2.2.3. Step 3: Round Robin Sharing

After the idea generation process, the facilitator collected and recorded all sticky notes and stuck them on the board without comment or discussion until all ideas were used (Dang, 2015). This step continues until all ideas have been shared and each participant has the opportunity to contribute their ideas.

### 2.2.4. Step 4: Discussion of Ideas

The facilitator introduced each proposed idea (components) of Islamic affairs to the participants. The participants clarified and discussed unclear ideas until all group members agreed with the proposed idea. The facilitator selected and commented on a sticky note with a similar idea to obtain participants' opinions. All these ideas were grouped and divided into several pertinent themes without discarding any idea (Dang, 2015).

### 2.2.5. Step 5: Voting Ideas

Based on the identified Islamic affairs components list, questionnaires were developed and distributed to the participants for voting. Voting was conducted individually to determine the importance of each component (Yahaya, Rasul, Yasin, & Sulaiman, 2020). Voting aims to rank each component based on a Likert scale of 1 (Extremely Unimportant) to 7 (Extremely Important). Subsequently, the facilitator collected the questionnaire for data analysis in Microsoft Excel. The descriptive analysis, such as total score value and percentage, was performed to determine the percentage agreement. The percentage agreement must exceed 70% (Anis, Masek, Nurtanto, & Kholifah, 2022) in order to include Islamic affairs components in the index instrument.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Profile of the Participants

This section depicts the analysis of three items of the demographic profile of the participants, including gender, academic qualifications, and working experience. The demographic profile data were presented in terms of frequency and percentage. In this study, a total of nine participants were involved. As illustrated in Table 1, the majority of the participants (n = 8) were male, representing 88.90% of the sample, while female participants only accounted for 11.10% (n = 1). Thus, this finding implies that the ratio of male participants is much higher than female participants. In terms of their academic qualification, the majority of the participants have a bachelor’s degree, with 66.70% (n = 6). This was followed by participants with a master’s degree, with (n = 3) participants representing 33.30% in this study. This finding indicates that most participants have a bachelor’s degree compared to those with a master’s degree. Finally, in terms of their working experience, the majority of the participants, 44.40% (n = 4), had working experience between 11 and 20 years. This was followed by participants with 20 years and above of working experience, representing 33.30% (n = 3). In addition, 11.10% (n =1) of the participants had 5 to 10 years of working experience, while another 11.10% (n = 1) had less than five years of working experience. This implies that the majority of participants have extensive experience in the management of Islamic affairs.

TABLE 1: Profile of the Participants.

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	8	88.90
	Female	1	11.10
Academic Qualification	Bachelor’s degree	6	66.70
	Master’s degree	3	33.30
Working Experience (Years)	Less than five years	1	11.10
	5 - 10 years	1	11.10
	11 - 20 years	4	44.40
	20 years and above	3	33.30
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>100.00</b>

### 3.2. Findings of NGT: Identification of the Components of the Islamic Affairs Index Instrument

The Nominal Group Technique was applied to determine the pertinent components that could be incorporated into the Islamic affairs index instrument. The participants

proposed and agreed consensually on the final list of components of the Islamic affairs index instrument. As shown in Table 2, the components of the index instrument were ranked and prioritised based on the total score of the voting participants from a Likert scale of 1 (Extremely Unimportant) to 7 (Extremely Important). The proposed components were not removed at the final stage because all components achieved a percentage of  $\geq 70\%$ . This indicates that each participant has agreed to include all eleven components in the index instrument.

TABLE 2: List of the Components of the Islamic Affairs Index Instrument.

No.	Components	Total Score	Percent (%)	Status	Rank
1.	Mosque management and enlivenment	59	94%	Accepted	2
2.	Islamic family management	58	92%	Accepted	3
3.	Performance of the state Islamic religious department	57	90%	Accepted	4
4.	Zakat management	56	89%	Accepted	6
5.	Enforcement and compliance of laws	52	83%	Accepted	10
6.	Understanding and appreciation of Islam	60	95%	Accepted	1
7.	Society well-being	48	76%	Accepted	11
8.	Excellent education	56	89%	Accepted	5
9.	Halal management	53	84%	Accepted	9
10.	Waqf and baitulmal	54	86%	Accepted	8
11.	Da'wah and tarbiyah	55	87%	Accepted	7

Note: Acceptance percentage  $\geq 70\%$

Referring to Table 2, the findings indicated that “understanding and appreciation of Islam” has the highest ranking compared to other components. Islam is an important foundation in the lives of Muslims all over the world. A good understanding and appreciation of Islam in everyday life is important in determining Islamic-based thinking. It cannot be denied that those who have understood religious knowledge and practised appreciation of Islam daily can restrain themselves from committing crimes. This is supported by Hadigunawan and Azahari (2016), who found that appreciation of Islam indirectly plays a crucial role as a foundation that can help Muslims deal with difficult situations. In this study, appreciation of Islam means appreciating, practising and implementing the religion in all aspects of life (Ghani & Mansor, 2006). The basic foundation of the Islamic appreciation consists of three main principles, which are the Islamic creed (aqeedah) as the core of the Islamic religion and the way of life of believers, Shariah related to the practices and behaviour of Muslims, and morality (akhlaq) as the ethics of life which is a manifestation of clear belief and established Shariah (Hadigunawan & Azahari, 2016). Hence, in order to develop excellent behaviour

and character, appreciation of Islamic teachings can help the Muslim community practise virtue in their lives.

The findings also revealed that “mosque management and enlivenment” should not be overlooked in the context of Islamic affairs. It is argued that the mosque serves as a crucial centre in promoting Islamic teachings and values among the Muslim community. As such, the mosque is a significant Islamic institution used not only as a place of worship but also as a centre for organising activities (Fahmi, 2022; Islamiyah, 2019). In general, the concept of mosque management emerges as the foundation for managing the various functions of the mosque. Mosque management can ensure effective and appropriate financial management as well as the ability to manage activities effectively (Sanusi, Johari, Said, & Iskandar, 2015).

In addition, the same can be said of “Islamic family management”, a key component of the Islamic affairs index. This implies that the family institution is one of the fundamental pillars of society, which is among the most important elements of society. As a fundamental organisation of societies, families serve as the environment in which individuals are born, grow up, learn to socialise and ultimately influence their behaviour and opinions (WHO, 2013). It has been shown, for instance, that the family has the main responsibility for the upbringing and socialisation of children and for teaching the values of citizenship and belonging to society. As such, the effective management of family institutions is an essential issue in developing human capital. Islam also demands to protect the offspring (Hashim, Khan, Shukor, & Yusof, 2020). The breakdown of the family can adversely affect the harmony and stability of society. Hence, building a strong family institution is another important aspect of Islam (A. W. M. Ali, 2018) that can greatly contribute to a society’s strength.

Nonetheless, based on the participants’ consensus (stakeholders), “society well-being” was recorded as the least significant component compared to other components. The well-being of society may have the least influence on Islamic affairs in the context examined. It cannot be denied that humans cannot survive without a society and societies cannot exist without members (Veenhoven, 2009). In the case of this study, societal well-being can be achieved when other components of Islamic affairs are maintained and strengthened in the Muslim community. Consequently, the participants indicated low acceptance of considering “society well-being” as a component of the Islamic affairs index instrument.

Surprisingly, it is interesting to note that “enforcement and compliance of laws” was perceived as the second least preferred component on the list. Despite its overwhelming role in promoting justice and maintaining order in society, implementing Shariah law



enforcement often draws negative comments and controversies among the Muslim community (Zakaria, 2019). Islamic affairs institutions should not take the criticism lightly, as weak law enforcement should be identified and improved to overcome the negative perception of the Muslim community. For example, Islamic affairs institutions should be more proactive in exercising their authority in this country. The constraint in enforcing Islamic law is caused by the lack of quality religious enforcement officers (Muhammad, Hamid, Thobroni, & Hussin, 2015). However, the main cause of the weakness lies in the poor planning and coordination of the enforcement process before exercising powers. Thus, law enforcement based on the legal framework provided can reduce societal conflict and ensure a sense of security among individuals.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study intends to identify the pertinent components of the Islamic affairs index instrument. The identification of the components for the index instrument was carried out using the NGT method. The level of agreement on the components of the index instrument was validated by the opinions of the participants (Islamic religious officers). Since this study focused on Islamic affairs, the participants proposed the components based on the foundations of Islamic affairs in the Malaysian context. Based on the findings of the study, eleven main components were agreed by the participants to be included in the indexing instrument. Subsequently, the final list of components acquired in this study will be further utilised in the next phase, which is to develop the Islamic affairs index instrument using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM). In short, the NGT is an effective method to help researchers identify the best components based on the opinions of participants in developing the Islamic affairs index instrument.

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