The impact of transnational culture on countering terrorism in Muslim countries: A critical explanation from Tawhidic paradigm

Suhaimi Bin Mhd. Sarif
Department of Business Administration
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Malaysia

Ashiqun Nabi and Tasnim Ferdaus
Department of Business Administration
Manarat International University (MIU), Bangladesh

Abstract

This paper tries to address the impact of transnational culture, which is basically consists of cultural diversity, multi-ethnicity, and multi-languages, on countering the terrorism. Transnational culture, through globalization and internationalization, can play a vital role on countering the terrorism both within and across nations, particularly in Muslim-majority nations. For the research purpose, the study obtained the opinions of 59 post graduate students from different universities in Turkey and Bangladesh through a survey on the impact of transnational culture in reducing terrorism. The study found that transnational culture has a significant impact on changing people's perspective about countering terrorism in today's Muslim world. The informants also viewed that the Tawhidic paradigm (Unity of God) offers spiritual dimension to educate and nurture people to respect other views, multi-ethnicity, cultures and languages which may lead to counter the terrorism in the Muslim nations. Nevertheless, the results of the study are constrained by the size of the sample and robustness of the analysis.

Keywords   Transnational culture, Globalization, Muslim countries, Tawhidic paradigm, Terrorism, Ethnicity

Paper type   Research paper

Introduction

The impact of Transnational Culture in reducing terrorism in Muslim countries becomes a hot issue nowadays. According to the theory, Transnational Culture refers to shared values or ways of life from cross-countries that embrace cultural diversity, multi-ethnicity, multi-languages, etc. as a result of globalization or the internationalization movement. On the other hand, the theory behind globalization is that worldwide openness will promote

inherent wealth and good relationships among all Muslim nations. Unfortunately, so far, the Muslim Ummah could not get the most benefit from transnational culture in countering terrorism in this globalization era.

Objectives

a. To identify the true meaning of transnational culture.
b. To mitigate the challenge of terrorism in Muslim nations through transnational culture especially in Turkey and Bangladesh.
c. To alleviate the challenge of terrorism through the Tawhidic paradigm.

Literature review

Definition of Transnational Culture

According to Fletcher (2015), it seems like today, more than ever, commonalities in cultural practice are all over the place when thinking transnationally. Neo-liberalism, globalizations have come to the mind when it is thought about transnational. However, Paul also thinks that, the most interesting space for discussing transnational cultural practice is in the realm of technology. The world grows smaller as modes and vehicles of communication become faster, more efficient and more easily accessible globally.

For example, Facebook is in many ways a transnational cultural meeting space where people from different nations, backgrounds, etc. are all status updating, liking and scrolling together. Therefore, transnational culture means the sharing ideas, thoughts, values to others by respecting other culture regardless the differences in multi cultures, multi-languages, multi-ethnicities and so on. Transnational culture helps us to embrace the other views, other thoughts without harming each other.

Definition of Terrorism

Terrorism has been a controversial concept, and this research adopts one of its well-known definitions: "the deliberate use or threat of violence against non-combatants by a non-state actor for the achievement of political ends, typically with the intent of creating a wider psychological impact (Patrick, 2011)."

Terrorism is often classified by researchers into domestic and international terrorism. Choi (2016) was one of the scholars who tried to distinguish between domestic and international terrorism. Terrorist attacks that targeted Oklahoma City or Tokyo subway could be labelled domestic. On the other hand, international terrorism refers to a terrorist act that takes place in a certain country; however, it involves perpetrators, victims,

institutions, governments, or citizens of another country. Choi reveals that the term - "International Terrorism" does not have a spatial significance, i.e., terrorists do not have to leave their country of residence and move to another country to be committing an act of international terrorism, they also do not need to be attacking under the umbrella of huge terrorist organizations to fulfill the criteria of international terrorism. The main criterion of international terrorism is to be able, while examining the targets, victims or terrorists involved in the attack, to identify the presence of a minimum of two nationalities (Choi, 2016).

According to Mills and Ware (2004), Terrorism may also be viewed as a means by which terrorists communicate with their targets. An attack provides a symbol whereby terrorists are communicating to the victims a message, for example, government weakness or dissatisfaction with a political situation. These types of attacks can be seen in the targets of terror. For example, destruction of government buildings or financial centers would touch the very heart of a country's foundation, symbolizing the inability of the system to with stand the power of the terrorists. Another possible explanation of terrorism is financial disruption or economic devastation. Physical acts of terror, i.e., bombing a building, can certainly cause extensive property damage; but whether this is the ultimate goal of a terrorist act is unclear. Large-scale attacks often cause secondary economic efforts resulting from the emotional impacts of terror. This would tend to support the view that terror is predominantly driven to make a symbolic statement.

The impact of terrorism in Turkey and Bangladesh
Terrorism refers the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. According to Wikipedia, In the 1980s and 1990s, Jihadist terrorism in Turkey was an isolated phenomenon represented by the Turkish Hezbollah and the Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front. Since the 2000s, there has been a rise in attacks from Islamist groups, some with links to Al-Qaeda. One group that has been studied by researchers is the Turkish Hezbollah.

In the 1990s, Islamic terrorist organizations were active in Turkey. Their objective was to bring down the secular democratic regime in Turkey and to establish an Islamic Sharia based state (similar to Iran). In July 1993, an arson attack took place where extremists set fire to a hotel where a cultural festival was taking place. Islamic groups attacked and threatened Jewish personalities and the Jewish community in Turkey.

In the course of the Kurdish–Turkish conflict (1978 – present) there were estimated 30,000-35,000 deaths between 1984 and 2000. While the Turkish government position has been to classify the deaths in the conflict as terror related, other disputes this claim and alleges human right violations by the Turkish authorities. In 1995, Human Rights Watch reported that it was common practice for Turkish soldiers to kill Kurdish civilians and take pictures of their corpses with the weapons; they carried only for staging the events. Killed civilians were shown to press as Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) "terrorists".

The Dokumaclar is an Islamic terrorist group composed of about 60 Turkish militants who joined ISIL. The group is responsible for the 2015 Suruç bombing which resulted in 32 deaths. Other attacks, like the 2017 Istanbul nightclub shooting, were perpetrated by Islamic State. Thus, it proves that, many terrorists are active to create havoc in Turkey to destroy the harmony and peaceful lifestyle in Turkey.

On the hand, in Bangladesh, the group Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh was formed sometime in 1998, and gained prominence in 2001. The organization was officially banned in February 2005 after attacks on NGOs, but struck back in August when 300 bombs were detonated almost simultaneously throughout Bangladesh, targeting Shahjalal International Airport, government buildings and major hotels. The Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), also called Ansar Bangla is an Islamic extremist organization in Bangladesh, implicated in crimes including some brutal attacks and murders of atheist bloggers from 2013 to 2015 and a bank heist in April 2015. Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (Arabic: حركة الجهاد الإسلامي, Harkat al-Jihād al-Islāmiyah, meaning "Islamic Jihad Movement", HuJI) is an Islamic fundamentalist organization most active in South Asian countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India since the early 1990s. It was banned in Bangladesh in 2005.

The impact of transnational culture on countering terrorism
According to McFarlane (2005), The main current terrorist threats in the Asia-Pacific region derive formal Qaida, Jemaah Islamiyah, Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Abu Sayyaf group, and a number of other groups associated with these. Again, the importance of networking and mutual cooperation between these groups cannot be over-emphasized.

McFarlane (2005) has also mentioned that, continuation of high incidence of terrorism and transnational crime in the region as demonstrated by problems associated with individual terrorist incidents, illicit narcotics, human smuggling, arms tracking, cybercrime, and the like it is

understandable that the public perception may be that regional efforts against terrorism and transnational crime are achieving poor results.

Nevertheless, there is no need for undue pessimism. Over the last six years, the regional states have achieved a far greater understanding of transnational crime issues threatening the Asia-Pacific and genuine progress has been achieved in reaching agreement on how these threats should be addressed. This level of understanding and cooperation is also facilitating cooperation on terrorism, and certainly in areas where terrorism and transnational crime overlap. There may be a long way to go to emulate the level of cooperation achieved in, say, the European Union, but it would be wrong not to acknowledge that a lot has been achieved. However, it is essential that this momentum should be maintained (McFarlane, 2005).

In a 1998 study, Johnston noted that despite increased public awareness of transnational terrorism and organized crime, reflected in the amount of attention given to these issues by political leaders and the media alike, there is still an important gap in the debate.

However, nowadays terrorism becomes a challenge in many Muslim nations due to disrespect the cultural ethnicity and other beliefs thus it must be mitigated through the establishing of transnational culture among the Muslim nations. In the figure 1 below, clearly mentions that, transnational culture embraces the cultural diversity, multi ethnicity and multi-languages among Muslim nations through globalization and internationalization across the countries, unfortunately the Muslim countries are failed to portray the true meaning of transnational culture.

That is why many Muslim countries are involved in war against Muslim counties. They do not welcome the other ethnicity, other language and other cultures which is totally wrong attitude among Muslim nations. Islam always appreciate the transnational culture which means the cultural diversity, multi-ethnicity and multi-language because Islam believes in one God and we all are servant to Him which is Tawhidic paradigm.
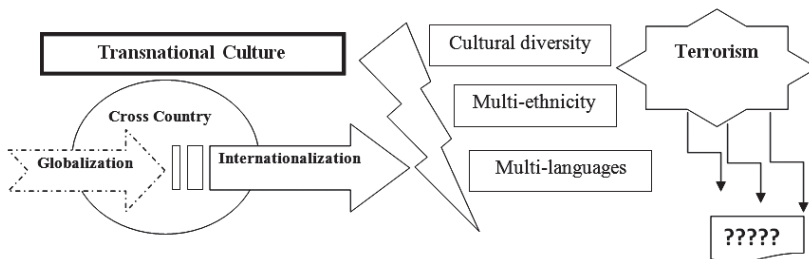

Figure 1: Challenges of transnational culture to reduce terrorism

Explanation from Tawhidic Paradigm

The impact of Transnational Culture can be explained from *Tawhidic* paradigm. Sarif and Ismail (2011) argued that *Tawhidic* paradigm implies 'global' thinking emotionally, cognitively and spiritually. Ismail and Sarif (2011) contended that *Tawhidic* paradigm is very essential element to spark 'transformation' as far as global dimension. Globalization from *Tawhidic* paradigm (Unity of God) that provides harmonious linkages between the worldly affairs (*al Dunya*) and the Hereafter (*al Akhirah*) in the context of business (Rahman, 1995; Beekun, 1997; Hamid, 1999).

Based on this premise, transnational culture in globalization from Tawhidic paradigm directs ethical obligations vis-à-vis promoting goodness ('amr bil ma'aruf) and preventing evil (nahi anil munkar) (Beekun, 1997; Hamid, 1999). Prerequisites to one's execution of the fundamental duties are possession of knowledge (al 'ilm), true conviction (al iman), and integrity (al ihsan) (Mawdudi, 1991; Laming, 2002; Ismail, 2004). Knowledge incorporates broad concept of ma'aruf which includes goodness (al khayr), righteousness (al birr) and lawful (halal) which deserve positive rewards (ajr) (Mawdudi, 1991). Munkar includes bad (sharr), sins (ithm) and prohibited (haram), which are related to corresponding punishment (al 'idam) (Mawdudi, 1991).
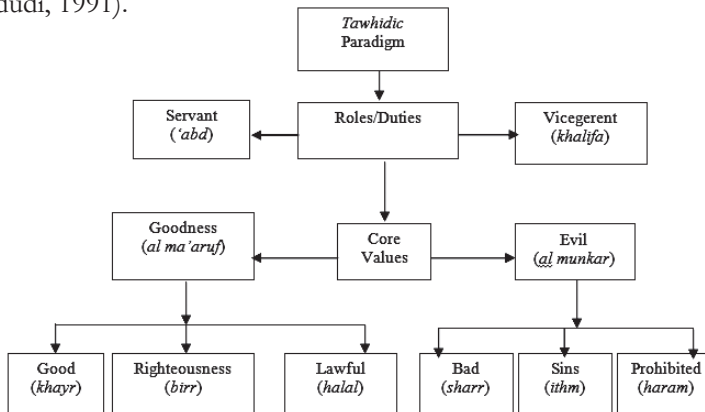
Figure 2: Fundamental principles of Tawhidic paradigm

Thus, embracing Transnational Culture can be established through the subscription of Tawhidic paradigm along with the good deeds prescribed in Islam. Allah SWT said in the Quran: And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one (Tawhidic paradigm); and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him." (Qur'an, 29:46)
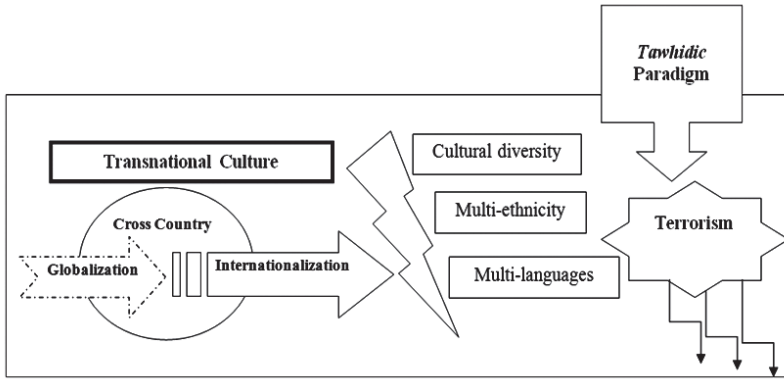
Figure 3: The framework of the study

In the figure 3 above, it clearly states that, if we can inculcate Tawhidic paradigm which reminds us that, there is only one God who is watching us every time and all will be accountable to him for our bad deeds then definitely everybody will be concerned with other culture, beliefs and ethnicity which eventually reduce the chances of terrorism in Muslim nations. Allah SWT sad in the Quran: Say: "O People of the Book! Come to what is common between us and you: That we worship none but God (Tawhidic Paradigm), that we associate no partners with Him that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords other than Allah. If then they turn back, say: 'Bear witness that we are bowing to Allah's will.' (Qur'an 3:64)

Methodology
The primary data for this study were collected from different universities at Istanbul in Turkey and Dhaka in Bangladesh. A total of 59 post graduate students participated in the survey. Considering the contextual issues, judgmental sampling technique was employed to select the sample units from post graduate students who were willing to respond to the questionnaire in the data collection procedure. Hardcopy and online copy (Google Form) were distributed to collect the data. For the purpose of question design the Five-Points Likert scale such as 5 indicates strongly agree, 4 indicates agree, 3 indicates neutral, 2 indicates disagree and 1 indicates strongly disagree. Data have been analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and presented in a descriptive way.
Although this study has been conducted mainly based on primary data but some secondary data were also collected from the secondary sources e.g., published books, journals and internet.

Analysis and findings
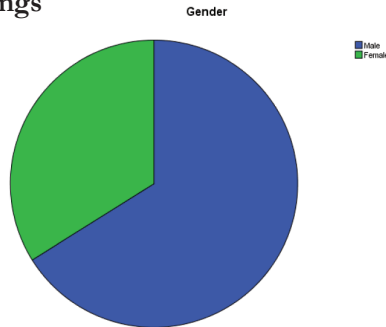
Gender

a) Gender: Out of the 59 samples of post graduate students, 39 respondents that means 66.1% respondents are male and 26 respondents that means 33.9 % respondents are female.

Age
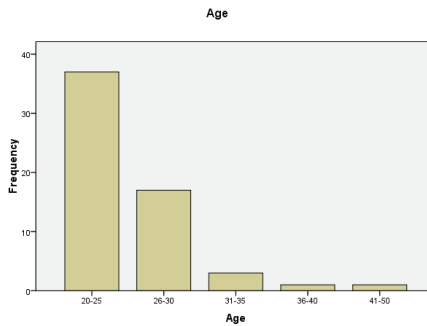
b) Age: Most of the respondents (38%) are in the age of 20 to 25 years. These young respondents are still continuing their masters. Some of the respondents are doing Ph.D. whose age is between 30 to 40 years.

c) County of origin: Respondents are from Bangladesh, Turkey, Sudan, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Somalia, India who are currently studding in Bangladesh and Turkey.
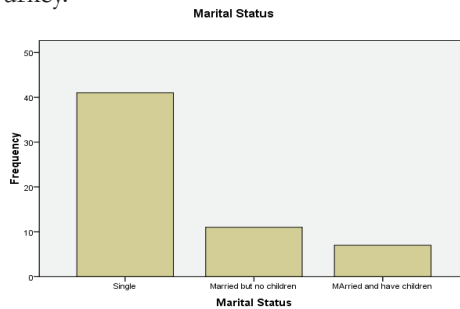
Marital Status

(d) Marital Status: Out of the 59 samples of respondents, 41 respondents that means 69.5% respondents' marital status is single, 11 respondents that

means 18.6% respondents' marital status is married- but no children, 7 respondents that means 11.9% respondents' marital status is married and have children.

At a glance of demographic factors of respondents

	N	Range	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Gender	59	1.00	79.00	1.3390	.47743	.228
Age	59	4.00	89.00	1.5085	.81733	.668
Academic Qualification	59	1.00	64.00	1.0847	.28089	.079
Marital Status	59	2.00	84.00	1.4237	.69984	.490
Valid N (listwise)	59					

Analysis of the research questions
a) Respondents' thinking about terrorism
   1) Almost 80% of the respondents have mentioned that, they were agreed and strongly agreed that, terrorism (violence) never brings happiness in any country.
   2) 85% respondents were agreed and strongly agreed that, terrorists should be identified in the very beginning and must be given counseling to them.
   3) 95% of the respondents have mentioned that, they never wanted to be involved in any terrorism activities in the country.

Descriptive statistics

	N	Range	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Terrorism (violence) never brings happiness in any country.	59	4.00	254.00	4.3051	1.22128	1.492
Terrorists should be identified in the very beginning and must be given counseling to them.	59	3.00	254.00	4.3051	.77135	.595
I never wanted to be involved in any terrorism activities in Turkey.	59	3.00	273.00	4.6271	.64054	.410
Valid N (listwise)	59					

b) Perception about the terrorism in the country
   1) 60% of the respondents said that, terrorism is one of the main problems in the country.
   2) But almost 80% respondents believe that, terrorism must be stopped by anyhow.

Descriptive Statistics about the perception of terrorism in the country

	N	Range	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Terrorism is one of the main problems in the country	59	4.00	195.00	3.3051	1.34234	1.802
Terrorism must be stopped in the country by anyhow	59	4.00	249.00	4.2203	1.01824	1.037
Valid N (listwise)	59					

c)   Perception about the terrorist
1) 83% respondents said that, they do not like who are terrorists even though they are so-called Muslims.
2) 85% respondents were agreed and strongly agreed that, most of the terrorists are involved in terrorism without knowing the bad impact of terrorism.

Descriptive Statistics of perception about the terrorists

	N	Range	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
I do not like who are terrorists even though they are so-called Muslims	59	4.00	270.00	4.5763	.83467	.697
I think most of the terrorists are involved in terrorism without knowing the bad impact of terrorism	59	4.00	245.00	4.1525	.92501	.856
Valid N (listwise)	59					

d)   Realization about the transnational culture on countering terrorism
1) 75% of the respondents think that, they should enhance transnational culture (shared values or ways of life from cross countries that embrace cultural diversity, multi-ethnicity, multi-languages) in the country.
2) 71% of the respondents believe that, transnational culture (respecting and sharing other views, cultures) can reduce the terrorism in the country.

Descriptive Statistics of transnational culture

	N	Range	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
We should enhance transnational culture (shared values or ways of life from cross countries that embrace cultural diversity, multi-ethnicity, multi-languages) in the country	59	4.00	230.00	3.8983	.86493	.748
Transnational culture (respecting and sharing other views, cultures) can reduce the terrorism in the country	59	4.00	228.00	3.8644	.89938	.809
Valid N (listwise)	59					

e) Introduce the Tawhidic Paradigm on countering terrorism through transnational culture

1) 77% respondents mentioned that, they think Tawhidic paradigm (Oneness of God- who is watching us all time) can also reduce the terrorism in Turkey.

2) Almost 80% respondents believe that, they must uphold the Tawhidic paradigm (Unity of God) in the country.

3) 93% respondents mentioned that they believe that, if anyone believes in one God (All will be accountable to Him), he/she cannot be involved in terrorism.

Descriptive Statistics of *Tawhidic* Paradigm on countering terrorism through transnational culture

	N	Range	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
I think Tawhidic paradigm (Oneness of God- who is watching us all time) can also reduce the terrorism in Turkey	59	4.00	235.00	3.9831	1.07465	1.155
We must uphold the Tawhidic paradigm (Unity of God) in Turkey	59	3.00	244.00	4.1356	.77588	.602
I believe if anyone believes in one God (All will be accountable to Him), he/she cannot be involved in terrorism	59	44.00	307.00	5.2034	5.34590	28.579

Major findings
- Terrorism (violence) never brings happiness in any country. Everybody should stand against the terrorism.
- Concerned citizen cannot be involved in the terrorism and terrorists should be identified in the very beginning for counseling to them.
- Terrorism becomes one of the major problems in the country and must be sopped anyhow.
- No one loves the terrorists no matter whether they are Muslims or not.
- We all should enhance transnational culture (shared values or ways of life from cross countries that embrace cultural diversity, multi-ethnicity, multi-languages) in the country on countering terrorism.
- Almost all the respondents believe that, believe in one God (*Tawhidic* paradigm) can reduce the terrorism and must uphold the *Tawhidic* paradigm in our daily life.

Recommendation
- Every citizen should come forward to counter the terrorism in the country.

- The government must take initiatives to increase awareness about the bad impacts of terrorism.
- We must uphold the transnational culture (shared ideas, shared cultures, respect other views and so on) to get a peaceful country.
- Tureky and Bangladesh should work together to share their cultures, ideas and thoughts to have better world.
- *Tawhidic* paradigm (Unity of God) must be incorporated in our life on countering bad the deeds (terrorism) and increase the good deeds for the betterment of the whole Ummah.

Conclusion

The study obtained the opinions of 59 post-graduate students from different universities in Turkey and Bangladesh through a survey on the impact of Transnational Culture in reducing terrorism in Muslim countries which becomes a rising issue nowadays. The study found that Transnational Culture has a significant impact on changing people's mind on countering terrorism in Muslim countries. Hopefully, this study proves from the opinion of different post-graduate students that the Tawhidic paradigm (Oneness of God) offers spiritual dimension to educate and nurture people to embrace cultural diversity, multi-ethnicity in reducing terrorism in Muslim countries as a servant of Him. These survey findings will help the researchers to get the view from the young generation about the cultural differences, terrorism, respecting different ethnicity, and so on. Nevertheless, the results of the study are constrained by the size of the sample and robustness of the analysis.

References

Beekun R. I. (1997). *Islamic business ethics*. Virginia, USA: International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

Choi, S.W. (2016). *New Explorations into International Relations: Democracy, Foreign Investment, Terrorism and Conflict*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Fletcher, P. (2015). What are examples of transnational cultural practice? *Quora*. Retrieved June 29, 2019 from https://www.quora.com/What-are-examples-of-transnational-cultural-practice

Hamid, A. W. (1999). *Islam the natural way.* London: Muslim Education and Literary Services (MELS).

Ismail, Y. & Sarif, S. M. (2011, October 1-2). *The role of Tawhidic paradigm in the transformation of management system.* Paper presented in the National Seminar on Islamic Management Systems Transformation, PWTC, Kuala Lumpur.

Ismail, Y. (2004). *Mengurus secara Islam: Model dan prinsip-prinsip pengurusan Islam bagi individu dan Organisasi (Managing with Islam: Models and principles of Islam for individuals and organizations)* (2nd ed.). Kuala Lumpur: A. S. Noordeen.

Johnston, R. J. (1998). Barriers to Transnational Policing, *International Police Review, 10,* 28-30.

Laming, S. (2002). *Knowledge in Human Society (selected Themes of Al-Qur'an): Universe, Knowledge, Khilafah, Amanah [and] Human Rights.* Kuala Lumpur: AS Noordeen.

Mawdudi, S. A. A. (1991). *Let us be Muslims.* Kuala Lumpur: The Islamic Foundation & A. S. Noordeen.

McFarlane, J. (2005). Regional and international cooperation in tackling transnational crime, terrorism and the problems of disrupted states. *Journal of Financial Crime,12*(4), 301-309.

Mills, J., & Ware, R. (2004). Responding to terrorism and achieving stability in the global financial system: rational policy or crisis reaction? *Journal of Financial Crime, 11*(4), 380-396.

Patrick, S. (2011). *Weak links: fragile states, global threats, and international security.* Oxford University Press.

Rahman, A. (1995). *Islam: Ideology and the way of life.* Kuala Lumpur: A. S. Noordeen.

Sarif, S. M., & Ismail, Y. (2011, December). *The influence of Islamic spirituality in the training of co-operatives managers in Malaysia.* Paper presented in the 10th International Conference of the Academy of Human Resource Development (Asia Chapter). Kuala Lumpur: The Academy of Human Resource Development and Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Corresponding author
Suhaimi Bin Mhd. Sarif can be contacted at: suhaimims@iium.edu.my

APPENDIX

Sample Questionnaire

Academic research questionnaire about the transnational culture on countering terrorism

This academic research tries to find out the problems of terrorism and how to counter this terrorism through the transnational culture (different culture, different language, and so on). This research also tries to look at the differences in perception of post-graduate students about the terrorism and how we can reduce it through Tawhidic Paradigm ("Unity of God", "There is only one God who is watching us every single moment and all will accountable to Him at the day of Judgment"). Your valuable comments regarding this research will be highly appreciated.

Please Tick (√) Mark where necessary.

Age		1.	20-25 years	2.	26-30 years		3.	31-35 years
		4.	36-40 years	5.	41-50 years			
Gender		1.	Male	2.	Female			
Education		1.	Masters	2.	PhD			
Country of origin		1.						
Marital status		1.	Single	2.	Married-but no children		3.	Married-have children

No	Topics	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Terrorism (violence) never brings happiness in any country.		1	2	3	4	5
2. Terrorism is one of the main problems in the country		1	2	3	4	5
3. Terrorism must be stopped in Turkey by anyhow.		1	2	3	4	5
4. Terrorists should be identified in the very beginning and must be given counselling to them.		1	2	3	4	5
5. I never wanted to be involved in any terrorism activities in the country.		1	2	3	4	5
6. I do not like who are terrorists even though they are so-called Muslims.		1	2	3	4	5
7. I think most of the terrorists are involved in terrorism without knowing the bad impact of terrorism.		1	2	3	4	5
8. We should enhance transnational culture (shared values or ways of life from cross countries that embrace cultural diversity, multi-ethnicity, multi-languages) in Turkey.		1	2	3	4	5
9. Transnational culture (respecting and sharing other views, cultures) can reduce the terrorism in Turkey.		1	2	3	4	5
10. I think *Tawhidic* paradigm (Oneness of God- who is watching us all time) can also reduce the terrorism in Turkey.		1	2	3	4	5
11. We must uphold the *Tawhidic* paradigm (Unity of God) in Turkey.		1	2	3	4	5
12. I believe if anyone believes in one God (All will be accountable to Him), he/she cannot be involved in terrorism.		1	2	3	4	5