

# IIUM2World Program for Societal Wellbeing Transformation of the Illiterates in Rural Community: An Empirical Finding

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**Abstract:** This paper is a sequel of the preceding research paper that was done to propose a conceptual solution for illiteracy problem that the rural community is facing. The proposed conceptual solution was to provide an e-program which is developed by IIUM, leveraging on the Quadruple Helix Model (QHM) collaboration and the potential capability of Network-of-Mosques (NoM). As a continuation from the proposed framework, data collection from the IIUM Community was deployed through a survey research in order to capture their level of interest to participate in voluntary projects, and at the same time promoting the project in-plan for the illiterates in rural area. As a result from the survey analysis, an improved framework for this project was developed whereby, basic practical Information Technology (IT) skills and basic mathematics knowledge will also be included in this program as well, so as to a relieve not only educational divide, but more apparently the digital divide among rural and urban community. The authors conclude with suggestions of future work for next paper.

**Keywords:** business model canvas (BMC), e-literacy, ICT, illiterate, knowledge, network-of-mosques (NoM), quadruple helix model (QHM), rural community, societal wellbeing, virtue.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading and writing is a core skill that human should possess in this ever-changing world. With these two basic skills, one can go out to seek and embrace knowledge and explore what the world has to offer. It opens the door to education and work, giving more opportunities to these individuals rather than the illiterates who are not able to read or write, at a disadvantage. To understand the conceptual definition of illiteracy, a person is considered illiterate when he or she is not able to identify and understand any languages by its writings. There are people who can read but write, while those who know how to write may also read [5].

The issue of illiteracy in the rural areas is still significant from the literature reviews done whereby one research [6] reported that 30.8% never went to school and 38.5% studied up to primary (elementary) school, and more than 28% are digitally illiterate. Therefore, the proposed framework was aimed to eradicate illiteracy among the rural community and close the gap that exists between them and the urban community.

With the data collection that was done through a survey research targeting the IIUM Community as the respondents, their motivation and drive to participate in volunteering programs are assessed while also asking for their opinions on the proposed project. The data analysis and empirical findings of the survey research motivated for a better idea and improved framework as will be presented in other components of this research paper.

## II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

According to [3], International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) aims to become a leading international centre of educational excellence which:

- i. Revitalizes the intellectual dynamism of Islam and Muslim Ummah
- ii. Integrates Islamic revealed knowledge and values in all academic disciplines and educational activities
- iii. Restores a leading and progressive role of the Muslim Ummah in all branches of knowledge and
- iv. Contributes to the improvement and upgrading of the qualities of human life and civilization.

As part of achieving this vision, we have come out with a proposed project for IIUM to carry out which focuses on uplifting the wellbeing of rural community through educational program by harnessing the Network of Mosque (NoM). Since mosques are mostly available everywhere in the country, Mosques are proposed to be the centre of our services. The targeted audiences for this program are the illiterates in the rural community of Malaysia who live around the mosque interfaith everyone.

This program offers Quadruple Helix Model (QHM), a concept of innovation research that integrates the Government, Academia, Industry and Citizen/Community [4]. In this proposed project, IIUM will cooperate with government agencies such as Ministry of Education (MoE), Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) to achieve goals.

Our proposed program will adopt blended mode of education which comprises of face-to-face method and also utilizing ICT and Internet. According to [2], ICT is a key enabler in the empowerment of rural communities in developing countries and it can establish a network for preserving, ordering and disseminating information to rural communities when carefully designed and implemented.

## III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Education standard of a nation can be seen by the illiteracy rate within the population. Literacy influences the development of one's nation because skilled workers are produced when a nation's population can read and write. However, in Malaysia, illiteracy rate among the population is still significant. Even with lifelong education that Malaysia has prepared for the nation while providing all resources and facilities, also allocating annual budget on education sector and encouragement to ensure that every citizen gets access to education – from basic education, lower primary education, higher secondary education, upper secondary/pre-University education, or higher education – there are still number of dropouts across these several stages or even some unfortunate people who had never gone to school at all [5].

Among the Malaysian population that are still facing the illiteracy issue are from the rural areas known as indigenous people or *orang asli*. These indigenous people still live deep in the jungles and other remote location of different parts of Malaysia. But if this Digital Era, reading and writing is not the only problem that must be taken into action, but they should also catch up with technology and basic education if not lifelong learning so that they can alleviate their social status and promote themselves to a more civilized and normal life like other Malaysians.

One of Malaysian government's goals, working closely with Indigenous People Development Division or *Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli* (JAKOA) [7] is to have a knowledge or computer literate society by 2020, and ultimately, digital inclusion has been part of the national plans. But knowing that the rural areas have less access to internet and technology like the rural areas, this is one of the constraints, what more with illiterates in from this community. Undoubtedly, surfing the internet requires users to be able to read but literacy rate is low in the rural areas [6]. Through some research done [6], one of the indigenous groups shows interest to embrace modernity and technology but the core of the matter still lies in their interest to be educated and achieve a commendable level of literacy.

Therefore, to enhance both literacy of reading and writing as well as e-literacy in order alleviate the educational and narrowing the digital divide between rural and urban areas, this project is initiated and proposed by IIUM. Furthermore, from the survey responses that were collected, basic IT knowledge and basic mathematics were suggested by many, to be included in this program as well.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the research aim and purposes, a quantitative method was adopted in order to collect data for the empirical study. A survey research was conducted where questionnaires were established and distributed to our targeted participants which are mainly the customer segment from the initial business model canvas formulated for the business case of our first paper [1].

The survey research was particularly picked and conducted at one point of time to get the opinions from sample targeted customers which are the IIUM Community, which comprises of the academic staffs, administrative staffs, undergraduate or postgraduate students, or others who consider themselves part of the IIUM Community. As the proposed project will be initiated and carried out by IIUM, its community was set as the targeted respondents as they are expected help out to voluntarily assist in the project as well.

An electronic (web-based) questionnaire was formulated through [Google Forms](#) and multiple channels were used to distribute the questionnaires. In order to get responses from the IIUM Academicians and Administrative staffs, emails were sent out randomly to request for a survey response. As for the rest of IIUM Community such as students, the "IIUM Online" Group on Facebook was utilized as the members of the group are over 30,000 and the response turnout from this channel is satisfying. Basically, random sampling technique was chosen in for the survey research as the aim was to select representatives from the whole IIUM Community or population without targeting on any particular Kulliyah/Center/Division/Institute of IIUM, thus obtaining a higher response rate.

The survey questionnaires used in this research contained open-ended and closed-ended questions and results. The questions were divided into four sections:

- i. The first section consists of questions regarding demographic descriptions of the respondents such as age, gender, nationality, education level, designation and also kulliyah/centre (department).
- ii. The second section describes the characteristics of IIUM community towards volunteer work.
- iii. The third section consists of Likert-response scale questions designed to capture the opinions of the respondents regarding volunteering reasons that are applicable to them. The items were measured by five scale of preference; from strongly disagree to strongly agree.
- iv. The fourth section focuses more on the respondents' knowledge of the issues and consists of open-ended questions for the respondents to give opinions and suggestions in related topics

#### V. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS & DATA ANALYSIS

This study has several limitations whereby; there are lack of participation from the university's academic and administrative staffs and our inability to reach the illiterates in rural community for data collection due to the time constraints to carry out the survey. The findings are discussed according to four sections as follows:

##### **A. Demographic:**

Based on the survey responses that we obtained, 61 responses were received. From the 61 respondents, 78.7% are female respondents while 21.3% are male. Majority of them are aged between 17 to 25 years old, which amounts to 82% of the total respondents. Among the respondents, 83.6% are Malaysians and the other 16.4% are international students/staffs. There are 67.2% of the respondents who have Bachelor's Degree as their highest education level followed by STPM/A-Levels/Foundation/Diploma at 19.7%, 8.2% have Master's degree and only 1.6% of the respondents have PHD. As for the designation of the respondents, 82% are students of IIUM, 9.8% are the administrative staffs, 3.3% are academicians and 4.9% consider themselves belonging to the group of 'others' in the university. Based on the findings, majority of the respondents who participate in this survey are from Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), which takes up to 42.6% of the total respondents.

##### **B. Volunteering Work:**

The questions asked in this section are more related to the characteristics of the respondents towards volunteering work. More than half, 61.7% of the respondents answered 'yes' when asked about helping anyone with unpaid teaching, coaching, tutoring or assisting with reading in the past 12 months. The respondents are asked to check boxes of

volunteering cause(s) that they care about and the top three causes selected are 'Children & Youth' (63.9%), 'Homeless & Housing' (49.2%) and 'Education & Literacy' (47.5%) as shown in Figure 1 below.

### What volunteering cause(s) do you care about? (61 responses)

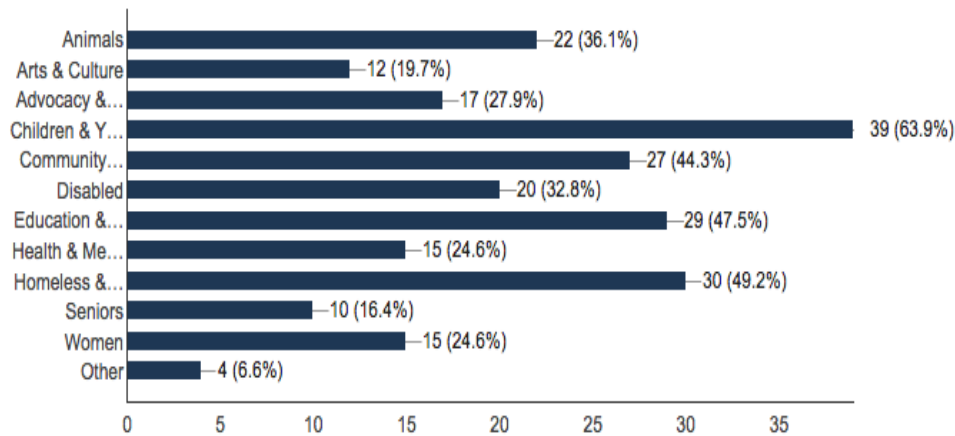


Fig.1: Volunteering Causes

The respondents have chosen the most important contribution in volunteering based on the dropdown-list given: time, money, leadership, resources and skills. 44.3% of the respondents think time is the most important contribution. Based on Figure 2, majority of IIUM community are willing to participate in volunteering as most of them rate 4 and 5 (49.2% & 37.7%) and only 1.6% of the respondents are unlikely to participate in volunteering.

### On a scale of 1-5, please rate your willingness to participate in volunteer work.

(61 responses)

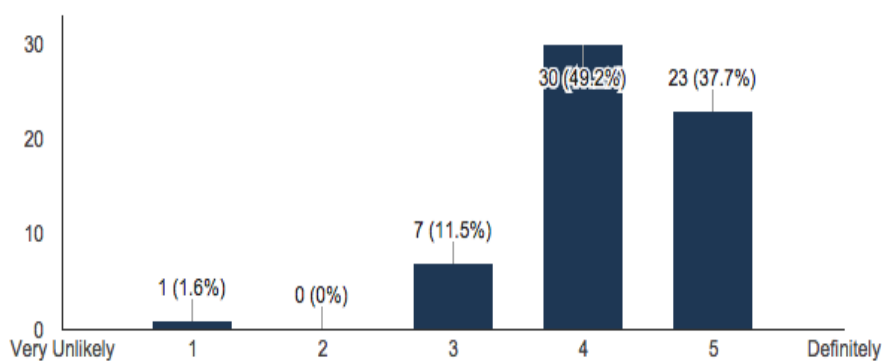


Fig.2: The Response on Willingness to Volunteer

#### C. Motivation/Possible Reasons for Volunteering:

The third section of the survey questions reported the motivation and possible reasons to volunteer. 52.5% of the respondents agree that being concerned about those less fortunate are reasons for them to volunteer while 31.1% of the respondents agreeing strongly, 8.2% are unsure and 8.2% of the respondents strongly disagree. 34.4% of the respondents agree that volunteering can make them feel less lonely while 31.1% agree strongly about it. Volunteering can make people make new contacts that might help the business career is kind of accepted with 44.3% agree, 18% strongly agree and 24.6% give neutral response. Most people said that volunteering can make them learn more about the cause for which they are working, with 54.1% agrees and 23% strongly agree about it. In addition, it allows people to gain new perspective on things as 49.2% of the respondents strongly agree and 39.3% agree about it. Almost everyone feel that volunteering is one of the ways to make new friends with 44.3% agree and 41% strongly agree about it. When asked if

volunteering experience will look good on individual's resume, 37.7% agree and 32.8% of the respondents are having neutral feeling it. While 41% agree to a certain degree that they can explore their own strength through volunteering, 39.3% strongly agree. At some point, 29.5% agree to a certain degree that volunteering is a good escape from own troubles. 52.5% agree and 34.4% strongly agree that people can learn how to deal with a variety of people through volunteering.

#### ***D. Program for Societal Wellbeing:***

Majority of the respondents are aware of the illiteracy issues in Malaysia as 65% of the respondents said 'yes' and 35% said 'no' when asked. If IIUM conducts an e-program to facilitate the illiterates from the rural area to read and write, 36.7% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree to assist, 31.7% of the respondents most likely to volunteer but 30% said they will definitely volunteer and only 1.7% of the respondents are very unlikely to volunteer.

The respondents gave suggestions on what to include in this e-program apart from teaching English, Malay and Islamic knowledge. Majority of the respondents suggested the basic use of information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics education to be included in the program. Some suggested enhancing multiple skills within them such as survival skills, effective communication skills, soft skills and many more. Other than that, some suggested to include teaching adab/moral and civic education, ethics, hygiene and health, arts, economics, history and most importantly Quran and Arabic. Furthermore, motivational and practical programmes are also recommended to add. Some said that we need to expose about outside world such as on nature and developed countries. Others highlighted that practical education is more important than theoretical.

Most of the respondents supported the idea of carrying the project in a mosque with 86% answered 'yes'. While 8.8% of the respondents said 'no', 14% suggested other places that are more suitable and comfortable such as teaching centre and classroom. Others recommended carrying out the project in a more open spaces like parks and gardens or somewhere with bigger hall. Other than that, some suggested the collaboration with IIUM Imaratul Masjid Group (I-Masjid) which is a volunteer entity of IIUM mosque.

In this section, the IIUM community gave opinions on how IIUM which claims to be the "garden of knowledge of knowledge and virtue" can help and contribute to enhance the condition of the current societal wellbeing. The suggestions include expanding the notion of garden of knowledge and virtue to other places as by sending volunteers under IIUM to organize more outreach programmes that are both knowledgeable and fun, educate those who could not afford education or by opening the gates of IIUM to people who want to learn. This can be done by offering more free tuition or online classes to public by utilizing mosque as the centre. Other than that, IIUM can organize more programmes on society engagement involving administration staffs, academic staffs and students. In addition, it is also suggested that IIUM community to utilize their knowledge and skills and put it into practice by reaching out those in need and help them with the capabilities that they have. A community involvement programmes such as teaching secular and Islamic knowledge to needy families can be organized during weekends. As knowledge has the ability to enhance the condition of the societal wellbeing, such programmes should be planned out on a larger scale. Apart from that, teaching can be made interesting with the modern technology. Also, the respondents suggest a platform for students to apply the theory knowledge that they have learned throughout semesters in IIUM. By organizing seminars or visit to any related issues will enhance the condition of the current societal wellbeing. Other than that, producing alumni who are kind hearted and selfless will also contribute to enhance the current societal wellbeing. Other suggestions include collecting data of students that are in need of help or set-up a donation within IIUM for students who are desperately in need of monetary assistance, educate the people by portraying the true Islam, develop awareness of the importance of helping others in need and Islamic knowledge in community. Others said that teaching adab (manners) and develop akhlak (ethics) is the most important thing. Some argued that IIUM should prioritize to enhance the current wellbeing of the students by focusing on the students facilities. Additionally, IIUM can contribute to enhance the condition of the current societal wellbeing by fixing the root first, which is IIUM students. This is because when the roots are healthy, the tree will give more benefits to the surroundings. In other words, the conditions of own self need to be enhanced as well to help others in need.

For final question, IIUM community gave opinions on the success probability of the project as shown in Figure 3 below. 54.2% of the respondents said the project is likely to be successful while 33.9% said most likely. 10.2% think of it as moderately likely and 1.7% of the respondents feel that the project is unlikely to be successful.

Final question, do you think this project will be successful? (59 responses)

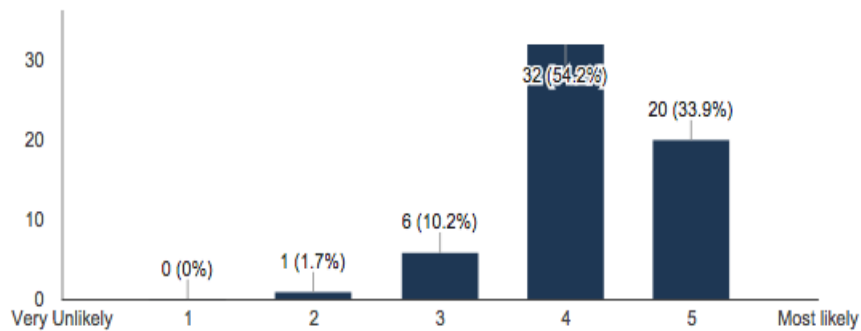


Fig.3: The Response on Successfulness of the Project

## VI. REFINED BMC FRAMEWORK

Based on the answers in the questionnaire given by IIUM community, the refined IIUM2World project is to implement educational program by adding basic practical Information Technology (IT) skills and basic mathematics knowledge for the illiterates in the rural community.

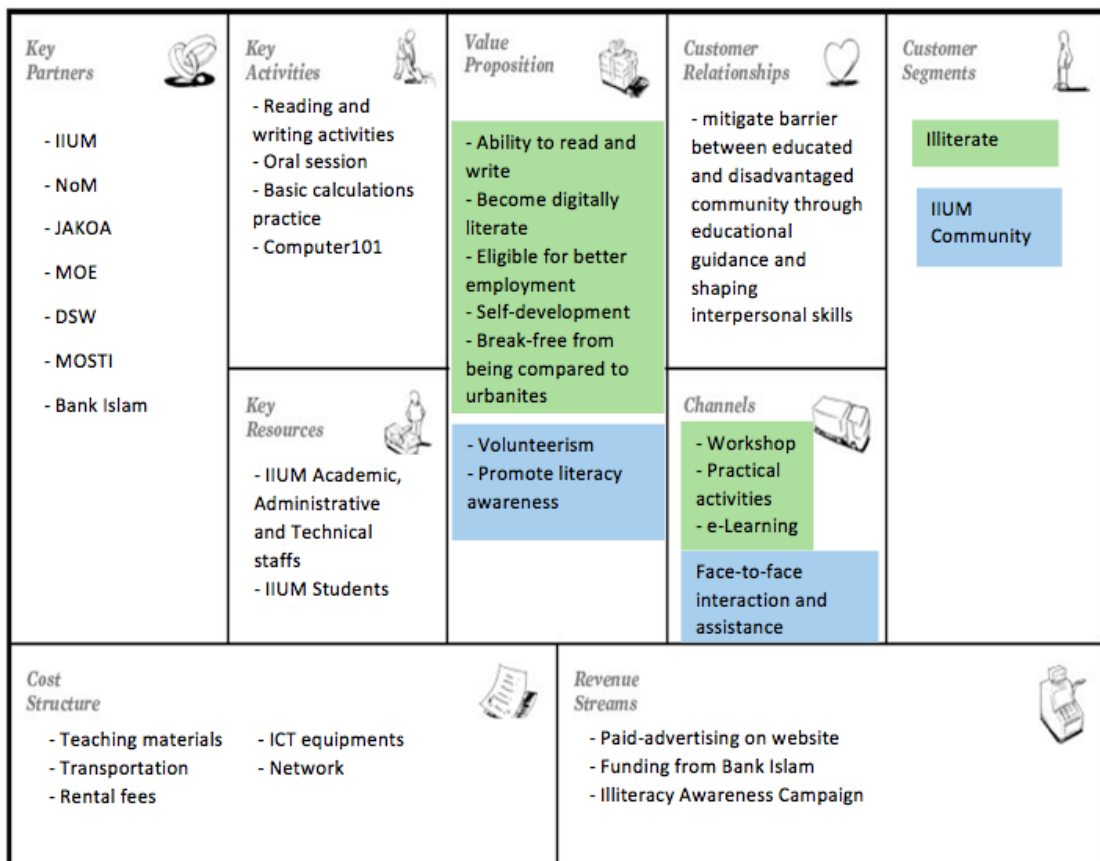


Fig.4. Business Model Canvas (BMC)

Figure 4 shows the nine blocks of Business Model Canvas (BMC) that was improvised from the initial proposed business case [1] as a result from the empirical findings obtained from the survey research. The detailed and refined explanations for this BMC are as follows:

The customer segments which this project intends to create value for are:

(a) The illiterates from the rural community as the main focus, whereby; they will receive guidance for their reading and writing skills while they also get to eliminate the apparent digital divide with the more technology-savvy urban community by getting assistance in basic computer skills. Through the mode of delivery such as workshops, practical activities, and e-learning where reading and writing activities, oral sessions, basic calculations practice and introduction to computer module, the now-illiterates shall develop themselves and later become educationally and digitally literate while having a brighter opportunity for employment and could break-free from being compared to the urbanites.

(b) IIUM Community; which is composed of the Academicians, Administrative, clerical and technical staffs, as well as students. Being the second customers segment as well as the key resources at the same time, this project will reinforce their sense of volunteerism while promoting literacy awareness for mankind through face-to-face interaction and assistance during the program sessions. It also enhances their selflessness as they give some assistance and knowledge by helping the disadvantaged community. It reflects back how IIUM has shaped these individuals throughout their existence within the garden of knowledge and virtue.

This project will work closely with several key partners such as (a) IIUM together with IIUM I-Masjid Group, (b) Network-of-Mosques, (c) Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA), (d) Ministry of Education (MoE), (f) Department of Social Welfare (DSW), (g) Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), and (h) Bank Islam.

Cost incurred will mainly be for teaching materials, rental fees, transportation, ICT and networking equipment and revenue will be attained through paid-advertising on the program's website, funding from Bank Islam as well as Illiteracy Awareness Campaign by IIUM Community.

## VII. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

From this study, we can conclude that the IIUM community have some grasp of the illiteracy issues in Malaysia and are willing to contribute to enhance the current societal wellbeing. With the suggestions given together with the business model proposed, it is hoped that the project will be implemented accordingly to eliminate educational and digital divide among rural and urban community. This paper can be improved by getting more respondents from the university's academic and administrative staffs in order to deliver more precise results that will describe IIUM community as a whole. The method used for collecting data could be revised in order to get more accurate and quality results. In the next study, we propose to carry out a face-to-face interview with the rural community for more accurate screen of the issues for the purpose of data analysis.

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