

國立暨南國際大學東南亞研究所

碩士論文

**The Islamic Revivalism and the Practices of Gender
Order: A case study on the ‘Obedient Wives Club’ in
Malaysia**

伊斯蘭復興運動與性別秩序實踐：
以馬來西亞「千依百順妻子俱樂部」為例

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那是趕在我 30 歲生日前最好的禮物，一本記載我曾經努力與付出才得以完成的碩士論文。我把它送給自己，要自己不要忘記在台灣度過兩年又八個月的美好時光，以及所遇見的每個人。

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2013 年 8 月 11 日凌晨 4 時 47 分 於暨大嵐莊

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論文摘要

1970 年代以來，泛伊斯蘭復興運動席捲全球，做為一個伊斯蘭信徒佔多數的國家，馬來西亞也受到伊斯蘭復興運動思潮的影響。伊斯蘭復興運動（dakwah）在馬來西亞展開，並改變了馬來族群的原有習俗與價值體系，包括其親屬觀、家庭結構、兩性關係以及性別秩序。同時，馬來西亞社會亦出現了多個伊斯蘭宗教組織，例如：澳爾根、穆斯林青年運動、伊斯蘭傳道會等。

2011 年 6 月 4 日，一群穆斯林女性菁英在馬來西亞成立了「千依百順妻子俱樂部」。俱樂部女性菁英主張信徒實踐「伊斯蘭生活之道」，恢復伊斯蘭精神以及對阿拉奉獻自我。俱樂部的中心思想包括：穆斯林女性必須絕對服從丈夫、支持「一夫多妻制」，妻子必須無時無刻滿足丈夫的性需求。她們深信藉由遵守伊斯蘭的性別規範，將有助於避免丈夫發生外遇，遏止丈夫參與非法娼妓活動、減低棄嬰案、穆斯林離婚率等。

「千依百順妻子俱樂部」的言論遭到馬來西亞社會大眾的嚴厲批評，把她們歸類為落後、傳統，並且受到父權意識形態內化、淪落為沒有主體性的受壓迫者。然而，筆者認為過去論及馬來西亞穆斯林女性的研究，往往脫離了女性所處社會脈絡的方式來探討問題，這使得「千依百順妻子俱樂部」的出現，被視為突兀、特殊、與現代化社會不和諧的異象。

本研究藉由深入訪談 11 名俱樂部女性菁英與蒐集文本資料，解析「千依百順妻子俱樂部」的出現與伊斯蘭復興運動具有高度的關聯性。另外，本研究亦說明俱

樂部女性菁英參與宗教運動的過程，其實是一種回應伊斯蘭復興運動的自覺行動。藉由遵守此一伊斯蘭性別道德秩序，這群俱樂部女性菁英依然保留了本身做為主體的自主性與能動性。更重要的是「伊斯蘭生活之道」為她們建構了一個「理想之家」，賦予她們內在與外在之精神支柱，解決高度現代化的社會亂象與道德問題。

藉由梳理俱樂部女性菁英言論背後的個人的思想源流、個人感受、以及她們的真實生命經驗，本研究發現，俱樂部女性菁英並非馬來西亞主流社會眼底下的「父權宰制的受壓迫者」。俱樂部菁英以虔誠的穆斯林身分，已進入歷史過程中，尋求自我的肯定，發展出本身之主體性。

關鍵詞：伊斯蘭復興運動、澳爾根、「千依百順妻子俱樂部」、主體性

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Abstract

In the 1970s there was a wave of Islamic revivalism throughout the world. This upsurge provided an impetus for the Islamic euphoria in Malaysia—the *dakwah* milieu. The revival of Islam caused a breakdown in the Malay customary laws and values of Malaysia, including Malay's kinship bonds, family patterns, and gender order and relations. Meanwhile, various Islamic organizations blossomed in Malaysia—i.e., Darul Arqam, ABIM, Ja'maat Tabligh.

This paper focuses on a club named the Obedient Wives Club (OWC), which was established by a group of highly educated Muslim women from Darul Arqam on 4th June 2011. The OWC elite Muslim women promote Islam as *din* (way of life) where members practice to revive the spirit of Islam and promote Muslim's submission to God. They stress that a Muslim woman should be obeyed to her husband. They agree that polygamous marriage helps to fulfill husband's sexual desires, keeping the husband from straying and curbing social ills such as prostitution, abortion and divorce etc.

The Obedient Wives Club caused a great deal of controversy in Malaysian society. The OWC elite Muslim women are regarded as backward, conservative and victims of a patriarchal religion. However, previous research into Muslim women in Malaysia has tended to explore the problem by paying no attention to the particular social context in which the women live. The absence of Muslim women's voice in mainstream studies has inevitably caused the emergence of the Obedient Wives Club to be seen as a new and strange phenomenon, contradictory to the prevailing concepts of modernity.

This paper employs text analysis methods, and also conducts in-depth interviews with eleven OWC elite Muslim women, aiming to clarify that the emergence of the Obedient Wives Club is inextricably linked with the wave of Islamic revivalism occurred in the late-1960s and 1970s. Secondly, this paper also shows that the OWC elite Muslim women's life of piety is, in fact, their 'conscientization' experiences towards the Islamic way of life. In addition, the OWC elite Muslim women have preserved their agency and autonomy by negotiating with their husbands' authority in their everyday life. Their decision to be 'Islamized' creates an 'ideal home' that provides inner and outer support for them, thus enabling them to react to the malaises that occur in modern societies.

Instead of seeing them as an oppressed group, the OWC elite Muslim women, in fact, have embraced their subjectivity in everyday life. They enter the historical process as responsible subjects, becoming individuals who know, and search for, self-affirmation.

**Keywords: Islamic Revivalism; Darul Arqam; Obedient wives club (OWC);
Subjectivity**

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1-1 Background to the Research

The Obedient Wives Club (OWC) was established on 4th June 2011 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This club was launched by the business organization known as Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad (GISB). Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad is an offshoot of the Darul Arqam Islamic movement. Its members are primarily the former followers of Darul Arqam.

Darul Arqam is an International Islamic organization that emerged in Malaysia in the late 1960s during the Islamic revivalism period called *dakwah* (Abu Bakar 1981; Nagata 1980; Shamsul 1997). Thence, the Obedient Wives Club is intimately linked with Darul Arqam.¹ The Obedient Wives Club consists of approximately 1,000 members around the world. Fifty percent of its members are intellectuals working as doctors, lawyers, dentists, etc.² The Obedient Wives Club puts great emphasis on the concept of ‘Islam as *din*’ (way of life) where members practice to revive the spirit of Islam and promote Muslim’s submission to God.

To invite the public...to go back...and lead the way of the Koran and Sunnah, the way...the life of the Prophet...that is the idea basically...because as we know...even though the country is developing so fast, there is moral decay in the community...and you see...you know, every fifteen minutes there is a divorce, every seventeen minutes there is a baby being abandoned. Because of this, we see the need to invite the people back to the life of the Prophet...where everybody lives harmoniously, people care for each other, Islam is the way of life, it is not just in the press...but in how you live daily...what we see now is quite depressing...so we just take the initiative to start something, as a contribution to the public...

(Pn. Azlina Jamaluddin, member of OWC central zone Malaysiakini. TV 2011/11/28)

¹ Please refer to <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?sec=nation&file=/2011/6/5/nation/8841974> (The Star Online 2011/06/05)

² Please refer to <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/bahasa/article/kelab-taat-suami-dipertahan-penganjur-samakan-isteri-bidadari-istimewa/> (The Malaysian Insider 2011/06/11)

The above statement expresses a significant perspective, primarily targeted towards the modernization/westernization process of Malaysia. Social malaises such as increasing divorce rates, baby abandonment, adultery, etc. have been described as the by-products of westernization/modernization in Malaysia.³ The Obedient Wives Club thus promotes solutions to redress these social ills. In order to resolve social unease, people are calling out for a return to the ‘normal way of life’.

What does the ‘normal way of life’ mean? OWC elite Muslim women provide distinctive perspectives on this. From their point of view, the unrestricted flood of western values that pervade Malaysian society account for the occurrence of social ills. The gender notion derived from the West causes women to neglect their domestic roles as mothers and wives. Husbands, who are deprived of a family’s cares and loves, therefore choose to stray and become involved in illicit sexual activity. Current modernization/westernization unaccompanied by religious values has become the trigger for divorce.⁴ The establishment of the Obedient Wives Club thus targets educating women, urging them to understand the central values of family; namely, women are asked to bear the responsibilities as good wives, and provide care and support for husbands.⁵ The Obedient Wives Club vice president, Pn. Rohaya explained:

The OWC intends to educate women. As a wife, they must obey their husband, please their husband, and ensure their husband is sexually satisfied. We consider this will help to prevent family breakdown problems.

(Berita Harian 2011/06/05)

The Obedient Wives Club holds that obedient women should accept polygamous marriage, and agree with the husband’s rights on wife-beating. In Al-Quran, wife-beating is aright that *Islam* acknowledges for the husband over his wife.⁶ And even further, the Obedient Wives Club also advocates that wives perform as first class prostitutes in fulfilling their husband’s sexual desires. The Obedient Wives Club assures that these

³ Also, please refer to Obedient Wives Club’s Brochure: *Roh Suci & Seks Suci Islam* (Pure Spirit & Islamic Sex).

⁴ Please refer to <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=%2F2011%2F11%2F29%2Fnation%2F9994329&sec=nation> (The Star Online 2011/11/29)

⁵ Please refer to Obedient Wives Club’s published work: *Seks Islam, Perangi Yahudi untuk Kembalikan Seks Islam kepada Dunia* (Islamic sex, fighting Jews to return Islamic sex to the world).

⁶ Please refer to <http://www.sinchew.com.my/node/207182> (Sin Chew Jit Poh 2010/06/05)

claims will effectively resolve adultery and extramarital affairs in society. The book *'Perangi Yahudi untuk kembalikan Seks Islam kepada Dunia'* (Islamic sex, fighting Jews to return Islamic sex to the world) has been published to enhance a wife's sexual knowledge, so as to satisfy her husband's sexual desires.⁷ In addition, there are various campaigns and activities organized by the Obedient Wives Club. For instance, on 28 November 2011, these elite Muslim women embarked on a twelve-day campaign called *'Rasulullah Tokoh Seks Suci Islam'* (The Prophet, Islam's Sacred Sex) located at Rawang, Selangor, to commemorate *Maulidur Rasul* (the Prophet's birthday). This campaign aimed at reversing moral decay in Islamic communities, the objectives included the fighting of illicit sex and the promotion of a wife's obedience towards her husband. The Obedient Wives Club has also decided to organize a touring exhibition, which will visit 1,500 places around the world, to promulgate knowledge of maintaining a blissful marriage, and educate Muslim women to fulfill their wifely obligations. The club has branched out to Indonesia, Singapore, Jordan, and London, to name a few locations.⁸

The emergence of the Obedient Wives Club, has garnered the ire of the public as well as non-governmental groups, especially pro-women organizations. The state, religious institutions, women's organizations and a vast majority of the people have denounced the club. The Obedient Wives Club is deemed conservative, backward and contravenes the concepts and notions of modern democracy. It transgresses the values of civilization. The

⁷ It is a 115-page pocket-sized book. In the book, a wife is taught to conduct marital sexual activities with her husband, fulfilling her husband's sexual desires so as to curb extramarital affairs. The president of the Obedient Wives Club, Khatijah Aam said, 'Sex is sanctioned by God and is intended to make a new life. All these acts are *halal* (lawful, good and permissible), pure, and beautiful and like a prayer' (between husband and wife). However, the Home Minister of Malaysia has banned the book with immediate effect. The contents of the book violated the JAKIM, the Malaysia Islamic Development Department's Islamic publication material censorship guidelines. Those found in possession of the book will be fined up to RM5,000, while those reproducing the book for the purpose of offering it for sale could be jailed for up to three years or subject to a fine not exceeding RM 20,000 or both.

Please refer to

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/islamic-sex-guide-says-wives-meet-only-10-of-husbands-desires-20111013-1ln5l.html> (The Sydney Morning Herald 2011/10/14) &

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/bahasa/article/kdn-haram-buku-panduan-seks-kelab-taat-suami/> (The Malaysian Insider 2011/11/03) &

<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2011/11/3/nation/9827051&sec=nation> (The Star Online 2011/11/03)

⁸ Please refer to <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/litee/malaysia/article/owc-rings-in-prophets-birthday-with-sex-ed-drive/> (The Malaysian Insider 2012/01/25) &

<http://www.guangming.com.my/node/119827> (Guang Ming Daily 2011/11/28)

advocation of the Obedient Wives Club is the most extreme example of gender inequality, by which women receive unequal treatment and have been subjugated by men.⁹

In short, the OWC elite Muslim women are perceived as a group of women lacking in self-consciousness, and are victims of a patriarchal system. The NGO women's Islamic group, Sisters in Islam (SIS)¹⁰ protests at what they consider to be the club's demeaning portrayal of women as a cause of social ills. Sisters in Islam pointed out that a wife's submission towards her husband would not be able to resolve social unease, in contrast, it would aid an increase in domestic violence within a household unit. Meanwhile, Sisters in Islam also refutes the club's statements which promote women's subservience and practice of polygamous marriage as helping to constitute a blissful family.¹¹

The Malaysian state government is strongly against the Obedient Wives Club proposing conservative ideas and concepts. The state exerts enormous efforts to promote values of equality, justice and democracy. It embraces gender liberty wherein women are protected by Federal Constitution in pursuit of their rights. Therefore, the state deems the Obedient Wives Club to be advocating absurd and seditious religious doctrines.

...acknowledge a husband's right to educate his wife, or even conduct a beating? This is a sick justification for a husband's violent act! It will cause severe domestic violence. Society should condemn this!

(The female unit of the Kuala Lumpur & Selangor Chinese Association, Malaysiakini 2011/06/11)

It is irrational to equate a wife's status as a first class prostitute...a wife's obedience should not be measured by her sexual performance towards husband. It is simply unreasonable!

(Fadhlina Siddiq, vice president of HELWA, ABIM Berita Harian 2011/06/11)

⁹ Please refer to <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/166184> (Malaysiakini 2011/06 06)

¹⁰ Sisters in Islam (SIS) is a women's Islamic group that strives for gender equality for Muslim women in the name of Islam. For further information, please refer to Chapter 3.

¹¹ Sisters in Islam's found that 64.8% of first wives said they were not informed when their husband took another wife, thus leading to a feeling of betrayal and pain, and 53% of them cited an increase in domestic violence. Please refer to <http://www.chinapress.com.my/node/259857> (China Press 2011/10/14) & <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2011/10/14/nation/9697302&sec=nation> (The Star Online 2011/10/14)

Women have contributed greatly to the nation but they [Obedient Wives Club] have diminished us to being mere sex objects.

(Ivy Josiah, Women's Aid Organization (WAO) Executive Director, The Star Online 2011/10/14)

To objectify women as mere sex objects to satisfy their husband's lust is simply unacceptable.

(The Joint Action Group of Gender Equality- JAG, The Star Online 2011/06/07)

These statements show that the Obedient Wives Club goes against the 'modern' gender order of Malaysia. The club's ethos that women are responsible for social unease has, in fact, degraded the dignity of women. In addition, it also deprives women of their basic rights. Objectifying women as their husband's sexual slaves would cause profound impacts to new generations, leading them to establish the wrong family concepts.¹² The Obedient Wives Club comes into conflict with Malaysia's state ideology; the club, being against 'thought', provokes traditional beliefs and values which misconstrue the 'modern' essence of marriage. Besides belittling men and women, the club's objectives even further damage the nation's image.¹³

This phenomenon reveals a picture full of contradictions, ambiguities and paradoxes in regard to the relationships between 'state, 'religion' and 'gender'. Malaysia's Federal Constitution and policies implementation are perpetually in accordance with the notion and development of 'gender equality'. Women receive constitutional protection against every form of discrimination. They play significant roles in Malaysia's economic growth. They are also recognized as a large source of labor in the market place. Current Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, has emphasized many times that women's social status has been raised through getting them involved in the economic transformation programs.

¹² Please refer to <http://www.bharian.com.my/articles/KelabIsteriTaatablehdikenakantindakanjikalangarsyarat/Article/> (Berita Harian 201/07/12)

¹³ Please refer to <http://m.malaysiakini.com/news/166184> (Malaysiakini 2011/06 /06)

Looking at the OWC elite Muslim women, they are intellectuals who have received a high level of education, and have developed successful careers in professional fields. They are supposed to receive the baptism of modern western thinking, like the Malaysian government's political elites who denounced the club. However, what they have displayed goes against the grain. The beliefs and values upheld by the Obedient Wives Club have infringed the state's ideology. What make these OWC elite Muslim women, who are highly educated and have obtained prestigious socioeconomic status, act so contrarily? This study attempts to answer this question by probing the implication of their 'anti-modernity act' through conducting in-depth interviews with them.

With reference to previous research regarding 'modernity', feminists tend to classify women who act contrary to modern notions as the oppressed group who have internalized false consciousness (Mackinnon 1987; Daly 1978). On the other hand, political elites are regarded as embracing ideology of 'internal Orientalism' as they tend to criticize public's 'anti-modernity acts', relying on their own perspectives (Wang 2010). Ong (1995) also noted that the state modernization process is customarily incompatible with traditional values. Women situated in such contentious situations thus encountered value conflicts and became victims of patriarchal oppression.

However, women should not be seen solely as victims in the trend of anti-modernization. According to Mohanty (1991), women are not a coherent group. Portraying women's victim identity as a whole actually overlooks the diversification of women, as well as the significance impact of different social contexts and elements such as region, class, and the cultural background of women. To use 'gender' as an analytical category, it should be located in a specific context. 'Gender' does not have 'the universal and timeless sufficiency of an analytical category (Rey Chow 1991). Butler (1990) also stated that, 'gender' is a performance. Thus, in order to probe 'gender', it is imperative for us to discuss it within context.

To return to my major concern, I found that public criticisms on Obedient Wives Club tended to explore the problem by paying no attention to the particular social context in which the women live. These studies also failed to take into consideration the influences of the Islamic revivalism that has emerged in Malaysia's society. The absence of Muslim women's context in those public criticisms inevitably concluded that the emergence of the

Obedient Wives Club, as a new and strange phenomenon, contradicts the prevailing concepts of modernity. Are these OWC elite Muslim women, who urge the restoration of the concept of a 'traditional gender order', an oppressed group?

It would be too simple to clarify the issue only based on the portrayal in the press. As De Beauvoir (1953:54) noted, 'A woman is defined as a human being in quest for values in a world of values, a world in which it is indispensable to know the social structure. We shall study woman in an existential perspective with due regard to her situation'. It clearly defined women as being tied to cultural and contextual influences. Therefore, to study women, this research was conducted within the specific context wherein these OWC elite Muslim women are located. Also, by drawing upon the inner voice of the OWC elite Muslim women, a deeper insight may be gained into their real thoughts and feelings. This comprehensive analysis demonstrates that these OWC elite Muslim women are not really victims of patriarchal oppression, as assumed by 'modern' society.

In other words, to maintain the good order of an Islamic community, the OWC elite Muslim women greatly criticize the 'modern' gender order which causes moral decay in Muslim society. In addition, they make a claim to follow the gender moral order in line with Islamic doctrines. This activity could be regarded as their conscious action corresponding to the Islamic revival movement in Malaysia. Through the participation of religion movements, OWC elite Muslim women have challenged the notion of a 'modern' gender order, which has long been advocated by Malaysia's political elites (Lee 2012; Ooi 2010). In reality, however, these OWC elite Muslim women have been conscious subject constructors holding the belief of an alternative gender moral order.

1-2 Analytical Frameworks

To underpin this research, it is necessary to develop a coherent analytical framework through which the analyses and findings could be structured and compared. In addition, it is important to grasp the definition of 'subjectivity' and distinguish the gender notion between Malaysian political elites and OWC elite Muslim women. The interviews were conducted in line with this analytical framework.

1. Definition of ‘Subjectivity’

As mentioned, the purpose of this research is to examine if OWC elite Muslim women are an oppressed group in a patriarchal religion, or actually a subject constructor? What is the real meaning of their ‘going back to tradition’ in the face of the high level of modernity in Malaysian society? To grasp the process of OWC elite Muslim women’s subjectivity formation, it is important to define ‘subjectivity’ first.

‘Subjectivity’ is a complex concept. Subjectivity includes our sense of self. It involves conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions which constitute our sense of ‘who we are’ and the feelings which are brought to different positions within culture (Woodward 1997:39).

Fromm (1942) stated that the structure of the modern society affects people in two ways simultaneously. Modern people untie the primary bonds to become more free and independent. However, the freedom gained by modern people also leads them to face uncertainties in their everyday lives. Living with uncertainties has made them feel isolated, alone and insecure. In order to ward off the feelings of isolation and insecurity, modern people seek for mechanisms of escape. They act as automatons, developing their personality based on the expectations of others. They cease to be themselves and work hard to become exactly the same as others. Being identical with people surrounding them, they need not feel anxious and alone anymore. However, at the same time, it shows that the thinking, feeling and willing of these people are induced from outside and are not genuine. According to Freire (2002), these kinds of people indulge in ‘false consciousnesses’; they are afraid to confront, to listen and to see the world unveiled. For them, experiencing ‘conscientization’ would lead to freedom which, however, would cause anarchy and disorder in their lives. Thus, people customarily escape from freedom.

In this study it is demonstrated that those OWC elite Muslim women, instead of escaping from freedom, act as a subject constructor, speaking in their own voices. They are neither anxious Muslim women being filled with a sense the self-doubt seen in Ong’s work (1995), nor similar to the discussion about falsehood—people, who refuse to admit that what they know is ultimately the reasons/explanation for their actions (Tong 1989:199). As Freire (2002:109) pointed out; being a subject, a person undergoes the process of ‘conscientization’. Instead of simply accepting the ‘implantation’ of concepts, values and

notions from the outside world, the subject is capable of entering into the situation and critically reflecting upon his/her existence and acting upon it.

By looking into the stage at which OWC elite Muslim women are being changed to become conscious of their self-identity, and how they show their ability to resolve difficulties and obstacles on the Islamic pathway, as well as how they act as social agents in the public sphere, could prove that OWC elite Muslim women have obtained a 'positive freedom' and successfully constructed their subjectivity. This 'positive freedom' leads people to relate themselves spontaneously to the world, enabling them to express their genuine feelings, emotions and intellectual capacities. As a subject, they have 'become one again with man, nature and himself without giving up the independence and integrity of his individual self' (Fromm 1942:120).

Secondly, while many studies deem Islam to be a 'tool' by which men dominate and subjugate Muslim women (Mernisi 1991; Al-Marayati 1995; Shaheed 1994), this study shows that OWC elite Muslim women are actually choosing to follow the Islamic gender moral order as they believe that it could help to construct their religious subjectivity, as long as they are adhering to God's will. This Islamic gender moral order asserts that the status of women and men is not hierarchically arranged according to sex. Instead, women and men are 'equal before God'. They play different roles under the eye of God. It shows that OWC elite Muslim women live within the family without being placed in subordinate positions. As an independent subject, OWC elite Muslim women manage to preserve their own autonomy and agency in the everyday life. They are aware of, and access, their rights and marital powers when dealing with their husbands' authority. They deem themselves being equal to men before God; they are not subjugated to the power of the husband.

OWC elite Muslim women's perspectives of a husband's obligations, a husband's right on the wife beating, a wife's submission to her husband, their ability to access divorce, as well as their views of their sex role in a family relationship clarifies that OWC elite Muslim women have their own say and have their own way, as men do. This is tantamount to Griffith's study which shows that women's submission to God and their husbands help them get a reward from God. God helps to heal their sorrow and ease their pain. At the same time, they lead their husbands to get closer to God, transforming them

into good husbands who are willing to devote to their marriage. Women thereby also obtain freedom and undergo transformation (Griffith, quoted in Sylva 2009:14).

Lastly, this study shows that as a pious Muslim woman, joining the Obedient Wives Club and practicing a true Muslim's way of life are ways of constructing an 'ideal home' which provides inner and outer support for themselves. They become an independent subject, being able to react and respond to the malaises that occur in modern societies. The OWC elite Muslim women's choices of being Islamized have extricated them from the sense of 'inner homelessness' which causes people to feel meaningless, fearful and insecure in their every-day life (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1995). They also obtain a sense of purpose and a meaning of life rather than being confronted with an existential crisis (Giddens 1991). And, while women's motherly and wifely roles are regarded as limiting their personal development and actualization (De Beauvoir 1953; Bauman 2003; Aminah 2008), the family mode advocated by the Obedient Wives Club provides them with a solution to the frailty of family structures (Bauman 2003), and helps them gain a balance between career and family.

The strong religious belief of the OWC elite Muslim women and their treatment of religion as a spiritual pillar has cultivated an emotional balance for them in terms of dealing with the malaises of 'modern' societies. Religion has a healing function that releases believers from feelings of sorrow and pain. In addition, according to Myers & Diener (1996), happiness and life satisfaction rise with the strength of religious affiliation. It, in fact, provides greater social support and hopefulness. Scrutinizing the OWC elite Muslim women's inner thoughts and their feelings of great reverence toward religion provides us with a deeper understanding of the process under which they become pious Muslim women.

Furthermore, by looking into the every-day life experiences of OWC elite Muslim women in terms of the polygamous family model, and including their views toward motherly and wifely roles, their interactions with the husband, co-wives and children helps to present these women as having embraced religion subjectivity and enjoying a blissful marriage and family life.

2. Modern Gender Order versus Islamic Gender Order

Apart from the concept of subjectivity, it is necessary to distinguish the ‘modern’ gender notions embraced by Malaysian political elites and that embraced by the women of the Obedient Wives Club. This cross-reference method helps to create an analytical framework and organize the relevant data of this analysis.

In 1995, Malaysia formerly acceded to CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women). As a state member of CEDAW, Malaysia has consented to take all appropriate measures to ensure that all forms of discrimination against women are eliminated. In addition, the Malaysian government also makes amendments to Article 8(A) of its Federal Constitution, in which the term ‘gender’ has been included as a prohibited ground for discrimination. The current Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, also urges that all corporate sectors have to include at least 30% of women in their decision making process,¹⁴ which aims at helping to increase women’s involvement in public spheres.¹⁵

Malaysia’s accession to a modern and civil state is clearly manifested by advocating the notion of ‘gender equality’. This notion of ‘gender equality’ is based on the philosophy of liberal feminism, which grants women equal civil rights and economic opportunities (Tong 1989:17). In other words, women are equally allowed to participate in the labor force and be involved in public affairs; women and men are given equal opportunity to develop their potential. Accordingly, the functions fulfilled in the social order would no longer be based arbitrarily on gender but on the skills, qualifications, personal convictions and devotion of the individuals to whom the tasks come (Amina 1995:31).

In addition, political elites agree on democratization of the private sector. The relationship between men and women are no longer being categorized as a dominant group and subordinate group, but based on a ‘pure relationship’. It is an equal relationship where

¹⁴ Please refer to <http://www.sinchew.com.my/node/195478?tid=1> (Sin Chew Jit Poh 2011/03/05) & <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?sec=nation&file=/2011/6/27/nation/20110627131533> (The Star Online 2011/06 /27)

¹⁵ With regards to the statistics of labor force by gender 1982-2011, women’s participation rate has increased from 44.5% to 47.9%, while women’s unemployment rate decreased from 4.6% to 3.3% (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, Year 2012).

free and open communication is a sine qua non of this relationship. It is not necessary to prohibit episodic sexuality so long as the principles of autonomy, and other associated democratic norms are sustained on all sides (Giddens 1992:194). As the political rhetoric often used by Malaysian political elites states:

Marriages are sacred. Blissful marriages are based on mutual respects and supports of the spouses.

(MCA-Malaysian Chinese Association, vice president, Senator Ng Yen Yen Sin Chew Jit Poh 2011/06/06)

Marriages should be based on the mutual consent, respect and cares of men and women. They are responsible together to set up an harmonious family and society. It is wrong to rely on one party to compromise or sacrifice when facing problems.

(The female unit of the Kuala Lumpur & Selangor Chinese Association, Malaysiakini 2011/06/11)

The above-mentioned shows that women are recruited in the national development process. In fact, Malaysian political elites have also promoted democratization in the private sphere where ‘pure relationship’ is emphasized; the value of ‘freedom’, ‘equal’ and ‘democracy’ were emphasized. In other words, the ideology embodied in Malaysian politics is actually derived from western liberalism.

On the contrary, the gender notion of the Obedient Wives Club is in line with Islamic law. The Obedient Wives Club makes claim to uphold an Islamic way of life. In light of their views, Islam is the solution (Fan 2009:173); it helps to resolve every difficulty in daily life. According to Islamic doctrines, the family is the smallest, yet an important unit in society. The roles of husband and wife are determined in accordance with Islamic teaching.

Islamic doctrines require women to be responsible for wifely and motherly obligations. A good husband is a protector and guide for his wife; the wife who obeys her husband becomes a righteous Muslim woman (Noraini 1984:122). A good wife does her duty with a smile, because this compulsory duty is given by God. They believe that to serve a husband is to serve God (Patricia 1997:31-32). Serving the husband is important

for Muslim women and it is common for a wife to justify an action by referring to the wishes of her husband (Sylva 2009:94). As Surat An-Nisa' verse 4.34 mentions:¹⁶

Men shall take full care of the women with the bounties which Allah has bestowed more abundantly on the former [men, with several special merits] than on latter [women], and also they spend a part of [their wealth] to maintain them. Righteous women are those who are obedient [to Allah and their husband] and guard their [chastity and whatever is put under their trust] in the absence of their husbands because Allah has guarded them. As from those of you who fear disobedience [nushuz], admonish them and [if they remain disobedient] send them to bed apart, and [if they still remain disobedient], beat them [lightly with the purpose of admonition]. Then if they obey you, do not seek a way to harm them. Truly Allah is Most High, Supreme.

The above verse from Al-Quran explains that in a marriage, the husband is the primary breadwinner and he is responsible for providing financial support to the household. Furthermore, he should protect his wife from all kinds of loss and discomfort. On the other hand, in order to repay her husband's kindness, a woman should devoutly obey her husband. It is also necessary for her to preserve dignity (Maulana Wahiduddin Khan 1995). Husbands may physically chastise a recalcitrant or disobedient wife as a final resort when other measures shall fail (Ruthven 1997:96).

In addition, polygamy is a legal form of marriage in Malaysia. A man is permitted to marry more than one woman, but is limited to four. During pre-Islamic times, polygamous marriages were a widespread phenomenon. When war erupted, large numbers of men were decimated. Thus it caused an imbalance between the sexes. On such an instance, polygamy was permitted to overcome the mentioned social problems. Surat An-Nisa' verse 4.3 stated:

If you fear that you cannot treat the female orphans with fairness [when you marry them], then you may marry [other] women such as seem good to you: two, three, or four of them. But if you fear that you cannot treat (your wives)

¹⁶ For Al-Quran verses, I refer to the Malaysia Islamic Development Department (JAKIM): <http://www.islamgrid.gov.my/flipbook/product/index.html>

with equal fairness then, [marry] one only or [many of] those [female slaves whom] you possess. This will make it more likely that you will not deviate from the right course.

In Islamic gender moral order, polygamy is permitted for husbands, but the husband is responsible for treating every wife equally. No spiritual inequality is implied (Ruthven 1997:95). Besides that, polygamy is not a means to justify sexual promiscuity. A polygamous marriage must be carried out in accordance with the Islamic law, husbands are trained to take up responsibilities, and manage equally his wives' and children's social and economic affairs (Nasr 1995).

Islamic law also comments expressively on the issue of sexuality in marriages. Sex is inseparable from the obedience doctrine mentioned in Al-Quran. As per below:

Your wives are your tilth: go, then, unto you tilth as you please...

(Surat Al-Baqarah' verse 2.223)

...They are an apparel for you, as you are an apparel for them.

(Surat Al-Baqarah' verse 2.187)

Sexuality in marriage is an important element for spouses to consummate their marriages. In legal Islamic marriage, a wife is required to fulfill her husband's sexual desires. A recalcitrant wife also includes one who disobeys her husband's command to provide him with sexual access to her. In such a case, the husband no longer needs to supply his wife with a home and maintenance (Dancz 1987:14; Husein Muhammad 2004:149). This implies the significance of sex in Islam.

In short, the OWC elite Muslim women advocate a gender moral order which is in accordance with Islamic doctrines. They believe that the morality of this gender order could help curb the moral decay caused by the influences of western values and cultures on Malaysian society.

The above analytical framework guides collection, sorting, prioritizing and interpretation of a variety of data and information about the emergence of the Obedient

Wives Club; thus helping to gain a better understanding on how OWC elite Muslim women obtain subjectivity through practicing Islamic gender moral order.

1-3 Research Methods

This thesis is the result of a field trip to Malaysia. It is a qualitative case study aimed at gaining further understanding of the status of Muslim Women in Malaysia. By drawing upon the case study of the Obedient Wives Club the assertion that Muslim women are synonymous with the concept of men oppression and subjugation is opposed. This part of the thesis discusses the research methods employed to comprehend the complex identity of Muslim women in Malaysia. Research methods used in this study include the following:

1. In-Depth Interview

In-depth interviews were used in this study as they are a useful qualitative data collection technique by which rich and detailed information may be gathering from individuals. This elicited data gathering allows researchers to explore the interviewee's perspective, feelings and behaviors on a subject. In this study in-depth interviews were conducted with eleven highly educated Muslim women. Most of them have high-social status careers, such as; pharmacist, dentist, professor, etc. Their invaluable information provided an understanding of the club's historical background, plus their perspectives and views on the nexus between Muslim women and Islamization in present-day Malaysia. In addition, these elite Muslim women in the Obedient Wives Club have built a career in modern professional fields, associated with high modernity values in everyday life, however, they act contrary to the 'modern' gender order promoted by the state's ideology. The real implications of their act deserve more attention.

Recruitment was achieved through snowball-sampling. Members of the Obedient Wives Club's were contacted via email, including a family member of Darul Arqam's former leader. After acquiring preliminary permission, I was allowed to visit a couple of Darul Arqam communities. An elder Muslim leader had been arranged to receive me during my visit to Rawang community, where the opportunity was taken to build up a good relationship with him. Ultimately, I was trusted and allowed to conduct my interviews in Rawang community. Thereafter, he further introduced me to a couple of Muslim leaders in other regions. With the help of these community leaders, I was able to consult more

interviewees from Kuala Lumpur and Selangor regions in Malaysia, covering Darul Arqam's communities in Rawang, Sungai Penchala, and Kota Damansara.

Each interview normally lasted between one and two hours, and was conducted in a combination of Malay and English languages. The interviews were not bound to a fixed questionnaire and the interviewees were only guided to answer on important questions, and led back to focus on the key issues if they drifted too far away from the theme subject. The interview's scope encompassed questions about their childhood, personal background, family background, and religious and secular education background. Consequently, a deeper understanding was gained on their inner thoughts, such as their philosophy, comments on polygamous marriage, Islamic gender norms, etc. These data help to identify the implications of their acts of upholding 'traditional Islamic values' which is in conflict with the 'modern' gender order. Are these elite Muslim women victim of patriarchy? Or are they, in fact, leading happy lives with subjectivity?

Lastly, due to the sensitive nature of this research, particularly the content related to the marital sexual issue and their inner feeling towards co-wives in polygamous marriages, the anonymity of the interviewees is maintained and pseudonyms (see Table 1).

2. Text Analysis

Some publications of the Obedient Wives Club were collected for analytical purposes, including confidential publications exclusively circulated among the Obedient Wives Club's members.¹⁷ It was worthwhile uncovering and investigating these invaluable materials, for they provide an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the Obedient Wives Club's perspectives and its members. In addition, this study employed newspaper articles, online news, as well as TV and radio talk-shows in Malay, English and Chinese. The data were collected from various sources in order to reveal the insights of the public, the state, and how the Obedient Wives Club responded to these opposition views.

¹⁷ Including the Obedient Wives Club's sex guide book: *Seks Islam, Perangi Yahudi untuk Kembalikan Seks Islam kepada Dunia* (Islamic sex, fighting Jews to return Islamic sex to the world) which had been banned by the Home Minister of Malaysia. Please refer to <http://www.smh.com.au/world/islamic-sex-guide-says-wives-meet-only-10-of-husbands-desires-20111013-1ln5l.html> (The Sydney Morning Herald 2011/10/14)

3. Participant Observation

In addition, participation-observation studies were conducted during the field trip. By staying in Darul Arqam communities it was possible to benefit from a close and intimate look at familiarity within the Obedient Wives Club's members and their everyday lives. The field trip was conducted immediately before the Islamic New Year celebrations, thus there was an opportunity to become involved in Darul Arqam's New Year activities and participate in the *halal* products exhibition held at Sungai Petani, Kedah by Darul Arqam. There, it was possible to gain first-hand accounts of their normal lives and gain novel insights into how they get along with their fellows. Observations were also made about how these Muslim women communicate and interact with their family members, and how they practice or live out their 'Islamic way of life'.

It is anticipated that the above-mentioned research design and methods will improve the validity of this study.

Table 1: Female interviewees' personal information

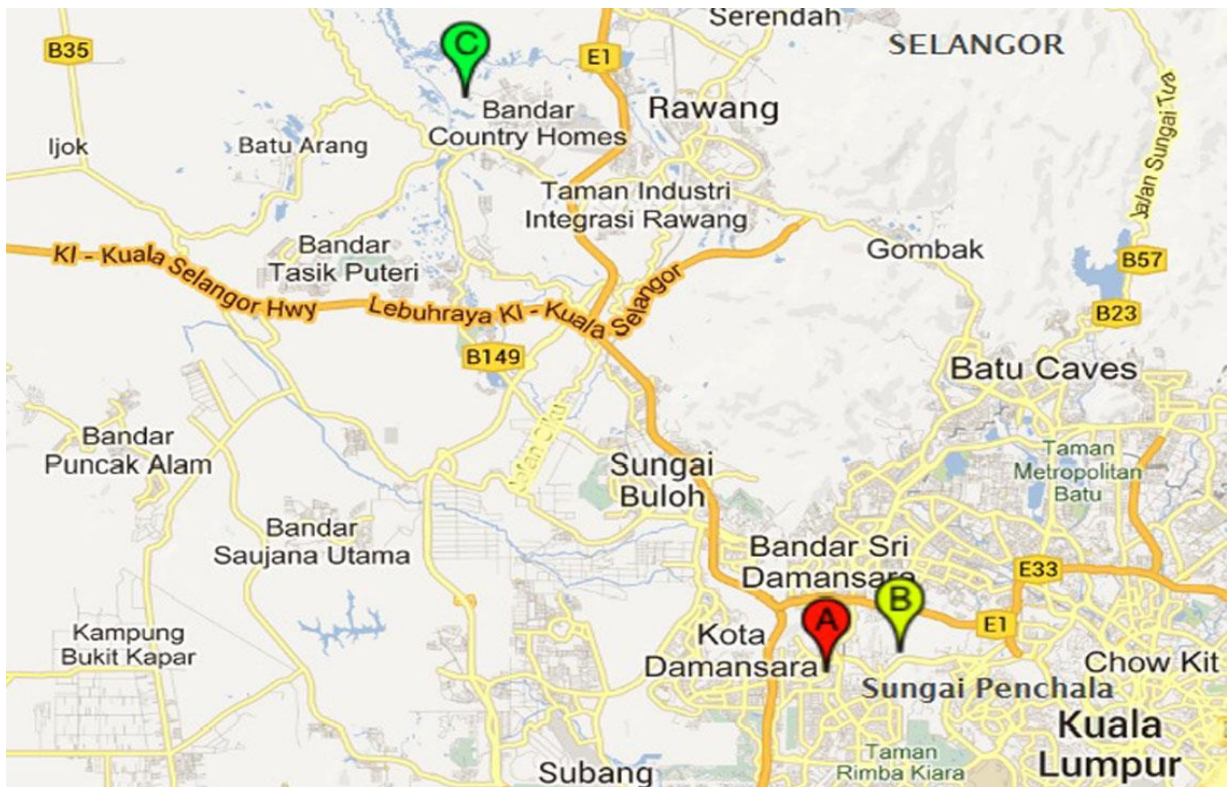
Interviewee name	Age	Wife No.	Co-wives (person)	Biological children (person)	Co-Wives' children (person)	Qualification	Position in OWC	Present job
Pn. Zakiah	41	1 st	1	8	1	Diploma in Food Technology	Committee member	Darul Arqam's Orphanage supervisor
Pn. Zainah	45	2 nd	3	4	5	SPM (equivalent to O-level)	Female unit manager in Bandar country homes, Rawang community	Darul Arqam's Kindergarten teacher
Pn. Hajah	48	1 st	1	8	3	Diploma in Education	Female unit manager in Damansara community	Secondary school teacher (have retired and work fulltime in Darul Arqam)
Pn. Rohaida	42	1 st	1	7	1	Bachelor Degree in Economics	Female unit manager in Sungai Penchala community	Secondary school teacher
Pn. Abdullah	42	3 rd	2	3	12	Bachelor Degree in Pharmacy	Committee member	Pharmacist
Pn. Azizah	49	1 st	1	4	4	Master Degree in Dentistry	Committee member	Dentist
Pn. Hasanah	52	1 st	1 (Passed away)	3	0	Diploma in Art	Secretary	Chef Instructor
Pn. Faridah	41	1 st	3	5	4	Bachelor Degree in Pharmacy	Committee member	Pharmacist

Interviewee name	Age	Wife No.	Co-wives (person)	Biological children (person)	Co-Wives' children (person)	Qualification	Position in OWC	Present job
Pn. Aminah	49	1 st	3	10	4	Bachelor Degree in Arabic Language	Committee member	Darul Arqam's Instructor / Motivator
Pn. Nur Sharifah	47	3 rd	3	0	24	Bachelor Degree in Management (quit after first year study)	Committee member	Regional Business Representative of Darul Arqam (Jordan & Singapore)
Pn. Laila	44	4 th	3	4	20	Bachelor Degree in Entomology	Committee member	Regional Business Representative of Darul Arqam (Egypt and Melaka)

Map 1: Malaysia's states and capitals



Map 2: Darul Arqam's communities Kota Damansara (A), Sungai Penchala (B), Bandar Country Homes (C)



CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Obedient Wives Club emphasizes the submission of Muslim women to their husbands; it promotes polygamous marriage and Muslim women are obligated to fulfill their husband's sexual desires. The OWC elite Muslim women strongly believe that their advocacies could help resolve social ills, such as adultery, baby abandonment, divorce, etc.

However, the aims of the Obedient Wives Club apparently transgress the normative rules, values, and meanings of gender moral order in contemporary Malaysian society. Their acts are viewed as a backward turn toward a more traditional gender notion, calling for the traditional gender order. From an examination of previous scholarly works, 'oppressiveness' and 'the subjectivity construction' were the major focus regarding Muslim women's issues.

2-1 The 'Oppressed'/'Otherness'

No subject is more fraught with controversy than the relation between women and Islam. In ubiquitous discourses Muslim women are cast quintessentially as the victims of a patriarchal religion, namely as an 'oppressed group' or an 'otherness'. For instance, many scholarly works about Muslim women have argued that the Islamic veil is a man's tool employed to persecute and suppress women (Al-Marayati 1995; Shaheed 1994; Al-Hibri 1982; Abdul Khalil 1993; Anees 1989). As Mernisi's (1991) work suggests, veiling is not a Muslim women's devotion to God; instead, veiling is a form of class oppression from male to female. It represents the ideology of male dominance and the tradition of 'mediocrity and servility'.

Those studies, however, have somehow been culturally insensitive and historically ignorant. In other words, they do not pay enough attention to the cultural diversity and unique historical experiences of Muslim women. Fortunately, scholarly efforts have been made to 'correct' this epistemological bias. For example, Mohanty (1991) through her work, *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, strongly criticized the dichotomy analysis framework formulated by western feminists. She pointed out that society had been divided into a simple opposition between the powerless (women) and the powerful (men) groups of people. The western feminists, based on the use of

western forms of knowledge to represent social reality, intervened and constructed a negative identity of third-world women. Western feminists situated themselves as a 'subject' (autonomy, modern and active) while third-world women as an 'object' (tradition, conservative, passive). Third-world women were viewed as a singular monolithic subject in western feminist texts. They had been deemed a coherent group, facing identical struggles under the patriarchal framework. This binding completely overlooked the diverse cultural background of third-world women which influenced their performance in political, economical and social stratifications. This method of analysis represented 'other' cultures in reductive and essentialist ways, and was a simplistic and unsophisticated view.

The post colonial theory is also a point of entry to this discussion. Hodgson (1977) criticized the epistemology of the 'Orientalism' adopted by western scholarship. Based on Hodgson, 'Oriental' is a concept or term that has naturalized cultural traditions. As the West underwent civilization and modernization earlier than parts of the non-western world, the western scholarly world thus portrayed the West as progressive and developed while those non-western regions were backward and underdeveloped. Regional experts customarily assumed that the East nowadays was undergoing the pre-modern period of western society. The concept of traditionalism was used to explain the cultural patterns of the East, and overlooked the internal dynamics of its development. Hodgson also criticized the modernization theory of Weber. He argued that Weber's modernization theory was a kind of epistemological dichotomy, classifying things into 'modern' and 'traditional'. Weber's research on religious sociology revealed that 'tradition' was opposite to 'rationality'. He criticized the scholars who blindly adopted the concept of 'Orientalism' as an internal referential system without reflexive thought.

Said (1978) drew upon Michael Foucault's theory—'Power and Knowledge' in his study. He showed that the 'Occident' (West) employed the concept of 'ours and theirs', to draw a demarcation line between themselves (West) and the East. Under the eyes of the Orientalists, the 'Orient' (East) was depicted inherently monolithic, primitive and inferior while the 'Occident' attempted to define themselves as active, rational, and sophisticated. In addition, the 'Occident' considered themselves to be a refined race, and had a responsibility to civilize and rule the 'Orient'. This assumption of western superiority facilitated projects of imperial and colonial rule. Said provided a critique of this western

imperialism. Simultaneously, he also criticized the Arab Islamic intellectuals who had internalized the ‘Orient’ notion without engaging in self-reflexivity.

It is also pointed out that many post-colonial elites adopted a west-centered theory without self-reflexivity in regard to nation-building and state-building in decolonized societies (Taylor 1997; Lee 2010). For example, state led-modernization projects in the post-colonial era were a pursuit of ‘false civilization’, there was no mobilization for liberation in public (Lee forthcoming; 2012). They regarded themselves as modern elites, who lived according to modern culture, obtained discursive power and the ability to influence the public. On the other hand, they framed the public as an ‘otherness’ who were backward and conservative. This ‘othering’ process carried out by intellectual/power elites was under the rubric of ‘internal-orientalism’ (Wang 2010).

2-2 State versus Religion

Apart from the above, ‘state versus religion’ serves as an important entry point to discuss Muslim women’s subjectivity issues. This line of research mainly illustrates that women’s bodies have been manipulated by state and religion in expanding their influences. Contestations between religion and state have inevitably given women an inferior and oppressed status.

Ong’s (1995) study illustrated that the complex contexts of ethnicity and culture in Malaysia caused ideological contestation between the state and religion. In this ideology contestation, women’s bodies were regulated by the state and Islam. They tended to lose the autonomy of their own bodies. During *dakwah*, the Islamic revivalism period, the state and Islam focused on different family notions and gender concepts. The state advocated a modern development to liberate Muslim women from domestic roles and enable them to enter the labor market. However, it simultaneously caused ambiguity and anxiety to Muslim women. The Islamic revivalism strengthened Muslim women’s motherly and wifely roles in the private sphere. It exerted a great pressure on Muslim women who participated in the public sphere. Muslim women were urged to conform to Islamic teaching, or else they would be subjected to pressure and outright threat. To escape from the great social pressure, Muslim women were thus forced to veil themselves and enter Islamic institutions.

The issue of abortion has brought controversy to many countries in terms of the relationship between the state and religion. Discussion about de-criminalization of abortion is one of the most complicated problems faced by the state of Indonesia. Surjadjaja (2008) stated that the abortion issue had been framed as an ideological struggle between state and religious. While the Indonesia state adopted the western concepts of democratic liberalism, Islamic fundamentalism continued to deepen its public influence, particularly, there were restrictions on women's movements and the criminalization their sexual liberties. Surjadjaja's research paid a great deal of attention to Indonesian Muslim women, who were the main subjects in the abortion issue. The criminal law in Indonesian stripped Muslim women of the right of abortion, imposing harsh criminal punishment to those involved in abortion practice. On other hand, Muslim women with an unwanted pregnancy had to face social exclusion and lose their family support. This was because abortion remained highly stigmatized in the Indonesia community. Women who had committed adultery and had a consequential pregnancy were prohibited from access to maternal health aids provided by the government. In some extreme cases, some unmarried Muslim women who chose to become involved in illegal abortions suffered serious injury or death. Islamic fundamentalism has thwarted the liberal democratic process in Indonesia. Women inevitably became victims of dual oppression, in the contention of state and religion.

Lukito's (2006) study of Indonesia's National Inheritance Law has deepened our understanding of Muslim women's position in Indonesia in general. The Indonesia state was in pursuance of liberalism and a secular milieu, co-opting a gender-neutral inheritance concept into its national legal system. However, it has been challenged by Islamic fundamentalists who hold a different view on inheritance issue. From the perspective of Islam, there is a clear distinction between women and men, women's status should not be equated with that of men. In the case of Islamic inheritance law, the portion of a man is same as that of two women. Thus, a woman did not in any circumstances have the same entitlement as the son. The state exerted strenuous effort to align Islamic values with state legal norms so as to promote the gender equality concept in Indonesian inheritance law. However, innumerable cases have shown that women are still subjected to discriminatory treatments through these Islamic gender-based regulations. The legal position of women is in a critical situation. They remain as an appendage of men. Islamic fundamentalism has even further militated against the state's transition towards liberalism and democratization.

Brenner (2005) displayed the contradiction phenomenon of women's position during the New Order regime in Indonesia. The New Order's ideology bestowed dual contradictory roles on Indonesian women. The state deemed women to be an important labor forces that contributed to the country's development and women were urged to become involved in this development process. In the public sphere, the identity of women was shaped as capable, modern career women who conformed to the state's ideology. However, based on Islamic principles, the state also heightened women's role in the private sphere at the same time. These women were warned not to neglect their responsibilities in the private sphere. The New Order's ideology encouraged women to prioritize their central position in the household. Women who abandoned their obligations to the family were judged inappropriate and could be the cause of marital breakdown. The masculinity discourse reinforced the assumption that women were a threat to men. Women were blamed for taking away men's jobs and undermining the proper order of gender relations. Hence, they were advised to return to the private sphere, for the sake of preserving household stability. Apparently, women were placed in an ambivalent and unfavorable situation in the conflict between modernity and religion.

2-3 Veil and Polygamy

Over the past two decades, the practices of veiling and polygamy have become important themes in the discussion on Muslim women's subjectivity. A large number of western feminist claims that veiling and polygamy practices perpetuate inequality between the sexes and that it is 'a symbol of oppression' to Muslim women. However, veiling and polygamy practices are actually complex and multi-faceted issues which should be further interrogated and contextualized to elucidate the reasons for their maintenance.

Firstly, Brenner's (1996) research shed light on the implication of 'veiling' among Muslim women in Java, Indonesia. She discovered that the adoption of 'veiling' by Javanese Muslim women was a new historical consciousness, created in order to dissociate them from the local past. For them, the 'past' was a blind adherence to traditional Javanese cultural practices and a localized form of Islam that frequently caused the Muslim community to lag behind the rest of the world. Hence, Javanese Muslim women looked for 'pure' Islamic doctrines to demolish the shackle of traditionalism. They quested for personal change and made a great effort to construct a better Islamic community. Here,

‘veiling’ was a conspicuous symbol which showed that they had internalized Islamic disciplines and were revealing their Muslim identity to others.

Furthermore, ‘veiling’ signified the awareness of Javanese Muslim women to Islamic revivalism occurring throughout the world. This awareness was tied to a sense of obligations and duties—women were made aware of the significance of becoming good Muslim women, and were responsible for their own actions. They became more self-regulated and self-disciplined in their daily life. They believed that ‘veiling’ would guide them to God. In other words, Brenner’s research found that wearing Islamic clothing brought a sense of ‘rebirthing the self’. Muslim women, who used to feel anxiety about their life in the current world as well as life in the hereafter, were now convinced that ‘veiling’, which committed them to Islamic teaching, would provide them with a feeling of security.

Moreover, ‘veiling’ also created a sense of self-mastery for the Javanese Muslim women. They chose to veil, albeit being rejected by their parents. This exercise of choice proved the rise of Muslim women’s autonomy. They claimed the right to regulate their own behavior rather than to be regulated by others. They refused to obey their parents and others who tried to prevent them from wearing a *jilbab* (a long and loose garment). For them, this prevention contravened Islamic teaching and their refusal to obey showed that they were capable of determining their own lives.

Lastly, Brenner said that ‘veiling’ was a process of self-reconstruction for Javanese Muslim women. Besides improving their own lives, Muslim women also made an effort to create a whole new, modern and better Muslim society. Brenner further explained that ‘veiling’ allowed Muslim women to distance themselves from the ‘West’. It was an action to extricate themselves from a colonial and post colonial past, and a rebellion against the capitalist, consumerist system which they believed could cause social diseases and moral decay (see also Göle 1996). By practicing ‘veiling’, Muslim women became more conscious of their behavior and were able to escape from sinful activities. This ultimately contributed to the creation of a new, modern Islamic society. In short, ‘veiling’ had created a new identity for Muslim women, and it was certainly not a marginal practice. It strengthened Muslim women’s identity and their assertive role in Islamic society.

From another perspective, Rinaldo (2010) examined how Islamic piety led to Muslim women's political mobilization in Indonesia. The women of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) expressed their piety by veiling and covering their bodies with a *jilbab*, often with several layers of clothing and heavy socks. They adhered to Islamic doctrines in every aspect of their life, playing the roles of mother and wife in the private sphere. Though they were assumed to be traditional, this 'private piety' practice in fact had been transformed and become a new 'public piety', opening up the public sphere to religious civil society. This collective 'public piety' provided the opportunity for a new kind of Muslim political subjectivity. Muslim women activists, who were pious and devout, therefore could take advantage of the religious public platform in pursuing political achievement.

In Egypt, numerous scholars of religion and gender had shown that 'veiling' offered certain practical advantages to Muslim women. Veiling was an individual coping strategy that protected Egyptian Muslim women from being molested and harassed by men. This made it possible for them to become involved in various sorts of public-sphere pursuits. 'Veiling' also helped to distinguish Egyptian Muslim women from the westernized women. Westernized women were characterized as 'contemptible women' that caused dishonor to family members. For Egyptian Muslim women, the westernized women would jeopardize the whole social stability. By practicing veiling, the Egyptian Muslim women thus managed to separate themselves from Westernized women, escaping from the 'immodest' and 'shameless' image framed in the westernized women. They therefore preserved their identity as a 'good wife and mother'. This identity provided high social esteem and dignity for Egyptian Muslim women, helping them to compete for good husbands and marital relationships (Mule and Barthel 1992).

'Veiling' could be a means of promoting the egalitarian spirit of Islam in Egypt. Zuhur (1992) found that 'veiling' made Muslim women look alike, and helped to obscure economic and social differences between upper and lower class women. In this situation, lower class women thus managed to overcome their feeling of inferiority and became ensconced safely in the community (see also Zenie-Ziegler 1988). Zuhur further explained that 'veiling' helped to cultivate the religiosity and pious identity of Muslim women. It was also a strategy for Egyptian Muslim women to respond to and resist any kind of political oppression.

In France, veiled Muslim women were frequently to be viewed as a victim of patriarchal religion. The state perceived Islam as an agent of *jihadist*¹⁸ terrorism. However, Ho (2006), in writing about the headscarf affair, explained that ‘veiling’ as a common theme, in fact provided specific implications and significances to Muslim women in different social contexts. He described the case of a French Muslim schoolgirl who shaved off her hair in protest at a ban of wearing a veil in state schools. The prohibition of ‘veiling’ caused a storm of controversy among politicians, press and the public. It further gained the attention of Muslim communities around the world. Apparently, ‘veiling’ is connected with international Islamic communities and played an important role in the transnational Muslim politics. It should not be labeled as anti-modern or a return to traditionalism. Apart from that, Ho also stated that ‘veiling’ was related to the politics of recognition. It served as a strategy for the Muslim community to attain Islamic modernity. Lastly, ‘veiling’ was also used by French Muslim women to pursue cultural reproduction.

In other context, ‘veiling’ was about a question of the rights of Muslim immigrant women (Maghrebin group) in France. By practicing ‘veiling’, Muslim immigrants obtained the liberty of cultural expression. They defended their right to veil as a mean of expressing their religion and cultures. Besides that, their act of ‘veiling’ was a response to the racist policy enacted by France. Most importantly, ‘veiling’ also helped to resolve the Maghrebin’s identity crisis. The Maghrebin’s rejection of the French customs in favor of their own tradition helped to protect their personal identity which was supportive of their self-concepts (Killian 2003).

Read and Bartkowski (2000) focused explicitly on a case study of identity negotiation among Muslim women in Austin, Texas. Based on their interview data collected from informants, ‘veiling’ was a vehicle to connect oneself to the broader community of other veiled women. ‘Veiling’ brought them a sense of sharing the same set of beliefs and values in the community. It thus helped to form meaningful peer relationships. This friendship network further united them and preserved their religious-gender-ethnic identities. Apart from that, ‘veiling’ liberated women from domesticity status. In Texas, the Muslim elites tend to restrict women in the domestic sphere. For them, women were susceptible to animalistic lust. However, through the ‘veiling’, Texas Muslim

¹⁸ A Muslim who is involved in a crusade.

women managed to segregate themselves from men and avoid men's gaze. It thus enabled them to work safely alongside of men and engage in extra-domestic pursuits.

'Veiling' had a new meaning in Afghanistan. The *chadari* (Islamic dress) could help to demarcate boundaries between women and men. Afghanistan is an honor-based country where women are a central pillar of the home. They are responsible for maintaining the family's reputation and preserving the *Namus* (honor) of their male-relatives. According to Billaud (2009), by covering from head to toe with *chadari*, an Afghan woman thus managed to segregate herself from unrelated men and avoid external gaze. It helped to keep women's modesty and ensure their firm commitment to the honor system. Apart from that, the 'veiling' strategy helped Afghan women to gain entry into mainstream politics. In Afghanistan, women tend to apply the strategies of 'dissimulation and invisibility' for the process of social inclusion and negotiation. By using a *chadari*, they remained 'invisible' and maintained the boundaries of gender while stepping into the space reserved for men. This 'absence presence' enabled them to become safely involved in public demonstrations. It further made their voices heard. 'Veiling' was also a medium of expression of one's nationalist endeavors and resistance against external influences. Women with a *chadari* could easily obtain a sense of collective belonging with their own political group and maintain a public presence.

The polygamous marriage issue has also provoked heated debates in society. Based on Nurmila (2007), arbitrary polygamy happened in Indonesian society. She criticized that the change of public policy, in particular Indonesia's 1974 Marriage Law was not exhaustive. It failed to protect the rights of women and children. The majority of Indonesia women were influenced by Islamic ideology. They were afraid that rejecting polygamy was tantamount to the transgression of the Islamic principles. In addition, they were often constrained by the Indonesian gender construction of femininity. They chose to stay in the unhappy polygamous marriages for the sake of conforming to the 'good mother' identity. Besides that, in polygamous marriages, women tended to depend on the husband for financial support. In order to maintain economic security, women had to endure the negative feeling of sharing a husband with another woman. Despite some women had successfully negotiated within the structures of patriarchal system, the negligence problems still existed. Women and children were treated unjustly by which the husband refused to visit his certain wife and children. In severe cases, the deserted wives did not

obtain monthly maintenance allowance from the husband. Some neglected children even had to drop out of school due to the lack of economic support.

Besides that, the social relevance of abuse was also investigated in relation to polygamous marriage. Women in polygamous marriages were subjected to various forms of abuse. The unequal relationship in the polygamous marriages often placed women at a disadvantageous situation. In central Java society, the husband was entrusted with the right to be sexually satisfied. A wife was obligated to serve their husband regardless of circumstances. Women faced physical abuse if they refused to fulfill the husband's sexual desires. They were objectified by the husband as a sexual slave. The competitive relationship between the co-wives further caused these women lacking of autonomy to refuse the husband's unreasonable commands. This was because they feared that failure to adhere their husband's commands might cause them to be abandoned. Women who were financially dependent often lived in a dire situation. They had to endure the pain of physical and sexual abuse from the husband in exchange for financial security. Besides physical injury, women in such polygamous marriages also faced psychological disturbances. These women tended to be fearful and suffered depressive disorder.

However, Tan (2009) challenged the prevailing views. She argued that women could not be understood simply as passive and helpless victims of polygamy. Her study dealt with the polygamous Muslim women's marriage views and practices in Malaysia. Tan found that Muslim women who opted for polygamous marriages in fact had 'instrumental-rationality' motives. There were Muslim women who entered a polygamous marriage so as to pursue economic stability and material wealth. In addition, polygamous marriage was a way to 'de-stigmatize' the negative image of a widow or an unmarried women. Widows and unmarried women tend to be perceived as vulnerable in sexuality. Thus, to escape from the social stigma and condemnation, Muslim widows may chose to become a co-wife in a polygamous marriage. It helped them to obtain an identity as a wife. Tan further explained that within the concept of 'Imaginary freedom', polygamous Muslim women could delegate the wifely and motherly obligations and responsibilities amongst four wives. Absence of the husband during certain periods also enabled Muslim women to gain personal freedom. They could pursue their self-interests and achieve self-actualization.

As can be seen from this review of the above literature, 'gender-state-religion' has served as the conceptual framework to gain an analytical look at Muslim women's general status and subjectivity. These studies show how Muslim women have maintained their traditional cultures while at the same time managing to use their creativity to obtain self-development. This valuable literature was the inspiration to study the subjectivity of Malaysian Muslim women through the lens of Malaysia's unique historical and social contexts.

CHAPTER 3: A Wave of Islamic Revival Movement in Malaysia

In the late 1960s and the 1970s there was a wave of Islamic revivalism throughout the world. Global historical events, including the 1967 Arab-Israeli wars, the oil crisis in 1973, and the 1979 Iran Islamic revolution, etc. provided impetus for Islam to serve as a 'solution' to a variety of crises. The majority of Muslims began to construe Islam as *din* (way of life) and shun secularism, namely the West. Islam has gained a foothold in all the continents of the world.

Parallel to the global revivalism of Islam, the Malay population of Malaysia confronted an acute dilemma, ineluctably linking themselves with the situation of other Islamic countries. The success of the Muslim community in Middle East countries has paved the way for Islamic euphoria in Malaysia, the *dakwah* milieu. In the light of many studies, there has been a dramatic transition of Malaysia's government's stance, which previously kept a circumspect distance from Islam, into turning to co-opt and assert Islam in its political and economic spheres (Nagata 1980, 1982, 1984; Shamsul 1997; Mutalib 1993; Barraclough 1983; Camroux 1996).

On top of the pervasive Islamic assertion in the political and economic spheres, the *dakwah* movement has also brought perennial impacts to the socio-spatial of Malay society. Since the Islamic revivalism in the late-1960s, there has been a breakdown of *adat* (Malay customary law) and values. The imposition of Islamic values on *adat* can be seen from the changes in Malay's kinship bonds, family patterns, gender order and relations. The contention between State and Islam has redefined and reshaped Malay womanhood and kinship. We can see the practice of *tutup aurat* (veiling to protect modesty), *pemisahan gender* (sex segregation), as well as an emphasis on *ibadah* (religious duties) becoming prevalent amongst Muslim women, and being the visible markers and symbols of the Islamization process.

In this chapter, the historical trajectory of Islamic revival movement in Malaysia will be examined, including how Islamic revivalism leads to the change of Malay's gender relation. Besides that, it is also imperative to probe the historical background of Islamic organizations which established during Islamic revivalism period. Last but not least, this chapter also attempts to explicate the intimate link between the Islamic revivalism and the emergence of Obedient Wives Club.

3-1 The Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia

3-1-1 13th May 1969¹⁹ Race Riots as the Starting Point

The birth of Islamic revivalism in Malaysia can be traced back to 1969. Many scholars have pointed out the Islamic revivalism in Malaysia is inextricably linked with the race riots of 13th May 1969 (Shamsul 1997; Mutalib 1993; McAmis 2002; Hussein 1988; Julian 2010; Jamil 1988).

The tipping point of the race riots owed much to the collision between the Malay and Chinese communities in the third general elections held on 10th May 1969. The ruling Alliance, National Front (BN) Party, which was comprised of three separate communal parties representing the Malays (UMNO), Chinese (MCA) and Indians (MIC), lost its 2/3 parliamentary majority. Thereafter, the jubilant Chinese-dominated opposition parties DAP and Gerakan (Malaysian People's Movement Party) held a celebratory parade on 11th and 12th in Kuala Lumpur. During the parade, some participants shouted taunting slogans such as 'Kuala Lumpur is ours', 'Death to the Malays', 'Malays go back to the villages' which gave rise to the Malay counter-demonstration on 13th May. Immediately prior to the start of the demonstration, a rumor spread about Malays being attacked on the way to the meeting by some Chinese intensified rioters' anger and eventually contributed to great bloodshed (Hussein 1988:128).

The 513 racial riots had undermined the tranquility of society and brought repercussions to the Malay community. The debacle of Malay supremacy in the 1969 elections intensified the rhetoric about 'existence of non-Malays threatens privileged position of Malays in the political sphere' (Julian 2010: 42). After 513 racial riots, Malaysia's second Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak took over the state's power. Fearing a recurrence of similar incidents, the government exerted strenuous efforts to reinstate the stability of society. Various policies were formulated. Particularly, New Economic Policy (NEP) was formulated for the sake of eradicating poverty irrespective of race. As Malays tended to have weaker economic positions and live in poverty, thus, by means of this policy, Malays were helped to increase their economic control and indirectly preserve their privileged positions (Jamil 1988:111-116; Julian 2010:42).

¹⁹ Normally known as '513' riots.

Meanwhile, there were Malay Muslims who nevertheless conceived of a downfall of 'Malayness' that was wrought by the government's pro-west development paths. Indications of 'Westernization' had caused severe economic and social malaises, for instance, bribery and corruption. These Malay Muslims criticized the NEP for merely keeping the ascendancy of the bourgeois class; and deepening the wealth disparity between the rich and poor Malays. It also ostracized rural Malay's benefits and rescinded their rights. According to Shamsul (1997:212), the 513 riots generated a sense of failure among young Malaysian Muslims, especially university students. Furthermore, the riots themselves could be seen as a catalyst for the turning to Islam among Malay youths attempting to resolve how to live in the world of radical doubt.

The influences of religion drew more and more attention from society. Ultimately, a wave of Islamic revival movements started to sweep over Malaysian society.

3-1-2 The influence of Global Islamic Revivalism

As discussed previously, the Islamic revivalism has sparked heated attention throughout the whole nation. It is noteworthy that this phenomenon has not emerged alone but has been accelerated by a string of external factors, which occur globally. In fact, *dakwah* activities in Malaysia run parallel with the 1970s Global Islamic revivalism. Here, an attempt is made to probe several significant international Islamic forces that buttress the rise of the Islamic revivalism in Malaysia.

Firstly, there was an important link between Malaysian and Indonesian *dakwah* activists, especially the Muslim Student Associations. Geographically, Indonesia is close to Malaysia, serving as the main Islamic penetration route into Malaysia five centuries ago. In the early stage of the *dakwah* movement, dating from 1969 to 1972, *dakwah* activists in Malaysia frequently leaned towards their Indonesian counterparts for spiritual inspiration, intellectual guidance, and practical help (Shamsul 1997:214).

Besides that, India and Pakistan were another source of influence in the Malaysian Islamic revival movement (Hussein 1988:119-120). Prior to 1960, there were Muslim traders and Sufis from the India sub-continent coming into Malaysia for trading purposes. Some among them chose to stay in Malaysia permanently and form Islamic centers in the

country, proselytizing Islam to a small Indian-Muslim urban community.²⁰ On the other hand, Pakistan, in 1956, had the constitution of an Islamic republic. It served as an important center, providing abundant ideas and diverse views in global Islamic politics. There were also a substantial number of Pakistani Islamic missionaries coming to Malaysia and becoming associated with Malaysia *dakwah* groups.

Last but not least, Islamic revival movements in the Middle-East Islamic countries also inspired the Malay populations in Malaysia to turn to Islam. The Malay populations in Malaysia, looking at the success of Middle East countries, began to treat Islam as the dominant religion and bolstered Islamic principles in every aspect of their life.

The Arab-Israeli wars were one of the significant historical events, having a galvanizing effect upon Malay populations in Malaysia. Historically, the conflict between Arab countries and Israeli was basically a fight over the land of historic Palestine and whether a Zionist state had legitimacy there. The Arab-Israeli war erupted in 1967 and ended with the defeat of the Arab side. Jerusalem, the so-called Muslims' sacrosanct city was occupied by Israel. Arab Muslims placed blame upon the United States, the closest ally of Israel, for its support towards Israel. Meanwhile, Muslims became aware that every single loss may have broader impacts on Muslim communities as a whole, thus they deemed themselves as brethren to preserve Muslim solidarity and pride. They asserted their anti-Zionist stand and earnest determination to recapture Muslim territories. In October 1973, war erupted again. However, this time, the Arabs succeed in frustrating Israel and defend Islamic honor and dignity. Arabs, as oil-producing States, through OPEC (Organization of Oil-Producing Countries) had manipulated the world oil prices. Furthermore, during the Iran-Iraq war in 1979, Iran, as a member of OPEC, cut off its oil supplies to the western powers which supported Iraq, leading to considerable anxiety and instability in the world economy (Mutalib 1993: 8-12). Iran's victory finally raised the Muslim's sense of self-confidence. They believed that the oil bonanza was God's bounty: a sign of God's mercy to help Muslims in their battle against the West (Ahmad Fauzi 2001:24).

²⁰ Malay Islam is intertwined with India through the India-based organization named Jama'at Tabligh. Generally, the Malays linked with them through affiliates in Malaysia and global Jama'at Tabligh activities, particularly in England. From 1970 to 1979, approximately 4000 Malays visited the Jama'at Tabligh's headquarters in India (Hussein 1988).

In addition, the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979²¹ also undoubtedly aggravated the revivalist climate. In 1963, the king of Pahlavi dynasty, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, announced his reform policies called White Revolution. However, these reform policies had received much public criticism. The *ulama* (Islamic scholars)²² who came from landowning families criticized the government's decision to buy the lands from them and sell it to the peasants at a lower price which caused substantial losses to them. Consequently, the *ulama*'s indignation was aroused with the injustice to them of the government. Thereafter, Reza Pahlavi became unpopular and was abandoned by the public. In Jan 1979, Iran's *ulama* called Ayatollah Khomeini, leading the strikes to overthrow Pahlavi's regime. In the course of great public animosities, Reza Pahlavi's royal reign collapsed after on February 11. In the same year, Iran held a national referendum, obtaining 98% of the votes that approved the establishment of an Islamic republic. After that, Ayatollah Khomeini was appointed as Iran's political and religious leader.

The Arab-Muslim performance on the oil crises 1973, and the Iranian Islamic Revolution were seen as a sign in which the Islamic revivalism was not a mere epiphenomenon. Instead, it sought to expand until similar revolutions were affected throughout the Muslim world. Malay populations in Malaysia were inevitably influenced by it. There was a sense of 'shared pride and honor' among Muslims that Islam could lead to the deposition of a tyrannical ruler and its replacement by the *ulama*, the consignment of secular nationalism to the graveyard, and its replacement by a sociopolitical order based on Islamic principles (Shamsul 1997:217; Mutalib 1993:10; Ahmad Fauzi 2001:27). With this 'shared pride and honor', Malay populations began to adopt Islamic principles as their party's objectives and strategies.

Evidently, events in the early of 1970s provided a platform that was conducive to an Islamic revivalism in Malaysia. There are myriad factors from the internal and external sphere contributing to Islamic activities in Malaysia. The Islamic revival movement, *dakwah*, would be responsible for the local Islamic activities occurring concurrently with

²¹Refer to the book: Islam: A very short Introduction (Ruthven 1997) and http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/khomeini_ayatollah.shtml

²²According to (Ahmad Fauzi 2001:27), The *ulama* are Islamic scholars who, by virtue of their religious education and knowledge, are entrusted with the responsibility of managing religious organizations and issuing *fatawa* (legal rulings) on behalf of the Muslim community.

the global Islamic movements. These long term activities had noticeable impacts on Malaysian society.

3-1-3 *dakwah* Phenomenon in the Malaysian Society

The most significance manifestation of Islamic revival movements in Malaysia is known as *dakwah*. '*dakwah*' originates from the Arabic word '*Da'wa*'. Generally, '*Da'wa*' is comparable to 'mission', it is a 'call' to follow Islam, and is used not only for gaining new converts, but to revive or reform the faith and life of all Muslims, especially lapsed Muslims (McAmis 2002:80). In accordance with Nagata (1980:413), *dakwah* means a 'call' or 'invitation' instead. It emphasizes *a-din* (religion as a way of life), sometimes as *perjuangan* (a striving) for religious truth, while some would even use the strongest term *jihād*, with all its connotations of crusade. Prior to the 1960s, the term *dakwah* was uncommon and unfamiliar in society, however, soon after the 513 riots, *dakwah* aroused enormous public attention.

In accordance with Peletz (1997: 235), *dakwah* could be regarded as a form of resistance toward a strand of Malay dilemma in Malaysia, and it asserted three kinds of development. Firstly, Malays requested the reformation of the state's western-oriented development policies that brought overdependence on foreign, particularly western capital. Secondly, as consequence of an acute imbalance of economics, Malays were placed at the lowest level of achievement comparable with Chinese and Indians; also the corruption, excessive greed, self indulgence and moral degeneracy which occurred throughout the Malay community led to the Malays' exasperation and call for immediate changes. Thirdly, in the aftermath of the 513 riots, Malays urged the solidification of 'Malayness' and an explicit demarcation of ethnic boundaries, particularly between Malays and Chinese.²³

Basically, *dakwah* was connected with the students. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, student activism occurred throughout the world. In Malaysia, the university students were the dominant activists of *dakwah* movements. On November 20th, 1974, the *dakwah* movement was first held by means of Islamic objectives. Thousands of *dakwah*

²³According to Peletz (1997), the ethnic boundaries between Malays and Chinese became more conspicuous after the implementation of the New Economic Policy. This policy primarily targeted a 30% share of the economics of Malays and granting special rights of Malays. Government resources (scholarships distribution, universities admission quota, business permits and so forth) were allocated based on the dichotomy: Malays or non-Malays.

students protested against peasant hunger and poverty²⁴ in the streets of Kuala Lumpur. Responding to the demonstration, the government arrested 1,200 of the protesters (Shamsul 1997:214; Nagata 1980:408). Thereafter, University and College Act 1971 was amended to permit direct interference of the government in university affairs. Students were kept under surveillance at the universities. Despite the act had obstructed student's political activities, the restriction somehow intensified the greatest resentments, leading students further to seek religion, namely Islam as a 'parapolitic outlet' to voice their concerns (Kessler 1980).

After 1974 the political-ideological orientation of the student activism underwent changes. *dakwah* movements had been extended to the national level and assumed more Islamic ideological movements. The Islamic force went far beyond the campus and penetrated into every layer of society. There were Islamic organizations emerged like ABIM, Darul Arqam, Jama'at Tabligh.

Fearful that the *dakwah* movement would become uncontrollable, and endanger its political dominance of society, the government, namely the UMNO sought to curb the radical aspects of the revivalism and include Islam in its policies. Many Islamic projects were implemented by the government, e.g., the establishment of an Islamic teachers' colleges and International Islamic Universities, the introduction of Islamic civilization studies at all universities, the creation of an Economic Development Foundation and an Islamic Bank, allocation of funds for mosque-building, Koran reading competitions and religious classes, the creation of a National Islamic *dakwah* Foundation in the Prime Minister's Department, Establishment of *dakwah* training Institutes which conduct courses in religion and Arabic, and dissemination of literature including the journal 'Dakwah', organizing a national 'Dakwah Month', to name but a few (Nagata 1980:430; Barraclough 1983: 969-970; Camroux 1996: 858).

Through the above-mentioned efforts, the government succeeded in competing and mediating with the *dakwah* force. But ineluctably, its pro-Islam policies simultaneously magnified the 'Islamization' process in Malaysia. It is noteworthy that the 1970s Islamic

²⁴ There were two peasant children reported to have died in Baling, Kedah. Some pointed out that these children suffered from hunger and had consumed poisonous yams. A tremendous demonstration was held in contempt of the government negligence of poor Malays in rural areas.

revivalism forces left their enduring effects in society. The tensions between the state and Islam are still discernible in contemporary Malaysia.

3-2 Islamic Revivalism and Gender Relations

In this session, the analysis looks at the ways in which Islamic revivalism is connected to the construction of Malay women's identity, subjectivity and status, how it brings about the change in Malay's gender order and relations in present-day Malaysia. To gain comprehensive analysis, the lifestyle change of the Malay *kampung* girls, and the emergence of the *dakwah* girls phenomenon in universities are closely depicted.

1. The Malay *Kampung* Girls Phenomenon

Ong (1987; 1995) described that the modernization and Islamization of Malaysia as being an intertwined processes, at one time, aligning with 'gender concept'. In 1971, the enactment of the New Economy Policy (NEP), brought its effect to ethnic relations, and also reworked the basis of Malay gender relations from within. Originally, the NEP aimed at eradicating poverty and reconstructing the economic status of rural Malays. The government promoted export-industrialization as the means of creating working class Malays, especially integrating rural Malay men into the rapid growth of the capitalist world. Malaysian economic policy practiced an open-armed approach to foreign and multinational firms, and incentives were provided to set up factories in Free Trade Zones (FTZ). As female workers were deemed docile and inexpensive, they were in high demand by capitalists to work in factories. As a result, there was a steady influx of rural young unmarried women to the urban area. According to Jamilah (1980), approximately 80,000 rural Malay girls had left their *kampung* (Malay settlement or village) to work in FTZ industrial areas by the late 1970s.

Women leaving their homes and working in factories brought about quantum changes in the *kampung* definition of male and female sexuality. In Malay gender ideology, Men have nine *akal* (rationality, intelligence, self-control) and one *nafsu* comparable with women, who have nine *nafsu* (animality, lust, desire) and one *akal*. Women were deemed to be as helpless as *budak-budak* (children) and susceptible to animalistic lust, thus, in need of male control. Malay masculinity depended on a man's economic power and moral authority over women in his household. By extension, all village men were responsible for

the moral status of all village women. After working in FTZ, these women became economically and socially independent of their parents and kin. Young women's wages were used to sustain their families' daily lives, and also support their brothers' education. Based on their earning power, they could omit the family head's permission—male authority, and obtained freedom to choose their husband independently. Women who worked in factories even brought back alien cultures, contrary to *kampung* notions, for instance, factory girls enjoyed to *jolli duit* (making jolly with money), wore cosmetics so as to achieve an 'electric look', and were also involved in the *sarong to jeans* movement (wearing tight T-shirts and jeans rather than *baju kurung*). In severe cases, free mixing between factory girls and men became more common, premarital sexual activities and abortions often happened (Ong 1987). The large-scale participation of young women in waged employment contributed to the increasingly mobile and dispersed population, this caused village men to lose their ability to enforce social norms and they could no longer guide and control female morality. Furthermore, depending on the daughter's earnings had posed formidable challenges to male authority and undermined Malay masculinity.

According to Ong (1995), apart from the repercussions of women's migration, the state's pursuit of modernity development around the 1970s, by introducing family planning programs, had challenged men's exclusive rights to their wives' sexuality. The government advocated modern concepts—contraception and fertility control, which made men fear that women could become emboldened enough to dissent from their husband's wishes. This also diminished the male conjugal rights over wives. Both family planning and the recruitment of young women into the labor force brought about doubts and ambiguities between male and female roles, and between the private and public spheres. In terms of gender relations, it caused women to become extricated from men's direct control and undermined the breadwinner status of men.

Ong (1995) saw the birth of Islamic revivalism—the *dakwah* movement²⁵ as a response to the breakdown of male authority and masculinity. The backwardness of Islamic society was seen to be due to Muslims who succumbed to their *nafsu*. Consequently, the *dakwah* movement advocated an immediate need to return to Islamic

²⁵The *dakwah* movement is not a unified movement; rather the term has been used loosely to describe a conglomeration of disparate Islamic organizations, communes, and cults (Raymond 1988: 401; Shamsul 1997).

Umma (community), and strengthen feminine behavior in line with Islamic teaching. *dakwah* activists perceived women to be the cause of social disorder. They criticized women's involvement in waged employment, and their indiscriminate passion which led to moral decay in society. They held that heightened female sexuality should be controlled men and that a woman's sexual allure was only acceptable as a pleasure for her husband. *Umma* was to reiterate Malay group identity, by redrawing the boundaries between Malay/non-Malay, Muslim/non-Muslim and most importantly to redress the Malay's gender and domestic relations. This call for a strengthening of Malay identity required women's adherence to a stricter Islamic version of male authority. Women's proper roles as daughters, mothers and wives were salient for a better Islamic community. In consequence, adoption of Islamic tradition—profession of faith, prayer, fasting, clothing etc. was infused into women's everyday life. Since the Islamic revivalism, women responded to *dakwah* messages by upholding a stricter Islamic way of life, shunning themselves from consumerism, westernization and world capitalism. The most explicit change of women was their resistance to western outfits and choosing to don *mini-telekung* (small scarf covering head and neck), and wore socks, gloves, and a face veil. Eventually, this Islamic revivalism led to the emergence of a Malay middle class.

The Islamic revivalism caused an increase in masculinity and male control. Middle class Malay women have always oscillated between the state and Islamic ideology. While pursuing higher education, demanding to be individualistic and modern, middle class women had to align with the *dakwah's* call which emphasized women's subservience. A sense of ambiguity, anxiety and insecurity thus existed amongst these Malay women. Further, Ong argued that so as to negotiate with the competing sources of power, state versus Islam, these Malay women eventually chose to veil, shaping their identity as supporters of modernity, at the same time, adhering to the *dakwah* movement.

2. The *dakwah* Girls Phenomenon

The Islamic revivalism forces do not only lead to the lifestyle change of the Malay *kampung* girls', but it is also powerful enough to expand its influence to the female university students in the urban secular environment. To discuss the impacts of *dakwah* on the female university students, below analysis is primarily predicated on Anwar's (1987) study of the *dakwah* phenomenon occurred in the universities in Malaysia.

After the 513 racial riots, the government exerted strenuous efforts to reduce the resentment of Malay Muslims. Under the New Economic Policy, a substantial number of Malay students were sent to the West for educational purposes, some of them to Britain, Australia and North America. Meanwhile, the establishment of three universities, namely, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), University Pertanian Malaysia (UPM)²⁶ and University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), also provided opportunities for a large number of Malay students to study in the local universities.

In the 1970s, the rise of Islamic revivalism provided profound impacts for Malay students who studied abroad, as well as in the local universities. Looking at the political and economic success of the Middle East countries, these Malay students started to feel doubt and be perplexed with the western lifestyle and its values (Nagata 1980:411; Hussein 1988:121; Camroux 1996:855). They started to seek alternative solutions in accordance with Islamic teaching and became more resolved to the Islamic way of life. Eventually, it contributed to the surfacing of *dakwah* movement in Malaysian society.

The university was a platform for *dakwah* activities in the 1970s. Apparently, *dakwah* students had a distinctive identity, compared with non-members. For *dakwah* girls, they were pleased to dress in a *hijab* (long, loose-fitting robes) or *mini-telekung* (small scarf covering head and neck). Some chose to obey more strict rules by wearing socks, gloves, and even a face veil so as to cover all their body and head. Islamic greetings had replaced the equivalent Malays words—*apa kahbar* (how are you), *selamat pagi* (good morning) and *selamat petang* (good evening) in their daily conversations and public speeches. They practiced gender segregation rules, e.g., in classes, libraries and on the buses. *dakwah* girls refused to meet with males when they were alone (Nagata 1980: 414-415; Ahmad Fauzi 2002: 109). Furthermore, from their point of view, joining a sport, or attending pop concerts and cultural dances were considered not *halal*. It detracted them from being a pious Muslim woman. They only chose to attend the Islamic activities which helped increase their Islamic knowledge (Anwar 1987: 51).

Besides reading the books and pamphlets in relating to Islamic teachings, *dakwah* girls held *usrah* (a small religious discussion session) group so as to learn about Islamic

²⁶ Currently known as Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

knowledge. Normally, an *usrah* group consisted of seven to eight female members. It was held once a week outside the university campus in order to escape the surveillance of university authorities. In the *usrah* group, *dakwah* girls prayed, ate and slept together. There was a session for them to discuss the interpretation of Islamic doctrines, and also personal problems covering from academic topics to problems with family and friends. They provided each other advices and supports, including financial supports to the members who needed help. Normally, the *usrah* sessions lasted all night long until *subur* (dawn) prayer on the next day. It dismissed after the group members finished performing the *subur* prayers together. After that, the group members went back to the university and began their normal daily life again. Besides that, *dakwah* girls also participated in the Islamic activities organized by the Muslim student societies in universities. For example, in the University of Malaya, *dakwah* girls actively joined the ‘Islamic Leadership Training’ course, so as to increase their commitment, faith and conviction towards the Islamic way of life (Anwar 1987:49-51).

Although the *dakwah* movements obtained great responses from the female university students, however, what must be clear is that the *dakwah* movement was not monolithic. It reflected different level of belief, commitment and lifestyles among the female university students. According to Anwar (1987), there were primarily three types of female university students, responded differently to the *dakwah* phenomenon in the universities.

Firstly, in face of the great pressure of *dakwah* groups, some female students chose to become *dakwah* girls in the universities. At the beginning, these female university students tended to practice the ‘secular’ lifestyle in their daily lives. They mixed around with others irrespective of race and sex. They joined sports and participated in the music concerts, cultural nights and so forth. However, their actions were marked by the *dakwah* groups in the universities. These female university students kept receiving anonymous letters from the *dakwah* groups, reprimanded them had contravened the Islamic principles. In fear of the threats from *dakwah* group, these female students eventually chose to join the *dakwah* movement. However, according to Anwar (1987), this type of *dakwah* girls tended to quit *dakwah* movement easily as they had no strong conviction towards Islam. There were cases showing that these *dakwah* girls gave up when facing the strong family opposition.

On the contrary, there were also female university students, despite having strong conviction towards Islamic way of life, feeling doubt to adhere completely the restrictive lifestyle asserted by the *dakwah* groups. For them, religion should not be that restricting. They wished to lead their own life albeit choosing to participate in the *dakwah* movement. While these female university students committed to perform prayers, veil themselves etc. they continued to maintain their ‘secular’ activities such as going to movie, cultural events. However, caving into this situation caused them to face a role conflict and confuse about the real meaning of Islam.

The third type of female university students that chose to become *dakwah* girls was those who participated actively in the *usrah* groups. Through the *usrah* group, these female university students raised their awareness to become a pious Muslim woman. They frequently obtained the feeling of togetherness in the *usrah* group, and were aware of their responsibilities to uplift the Islam status in the society. They advocated the practices of Islamic social order, and followed strictly to the commandments of Islam. They criticized the government’s Islamization programs which only aimed at restraining the rise of Islam. For them, the Islamic law should be implemented throughout the Malaysian society.

Thus far the nexus between Islamic revivalism and Malay’s gender relation has been sketched. Though, based on Ong’s (1987; 1995) and Anwar’s studies, *dakwah* movement had shaped different types of the Malay women in Malaysian society. Thence, It is clear that women shouldn’t be seen as a coherent group across contexts, regardless of class or ethnicity, structures in the world are ultimately binary, dichotomous terms, where women are oppressed by men. The religious, legal, economic, familial system should not implicitly be assumed to be constructed by men. For example, veiling could be a way of affirming cultural identity rather than a symbol of women’s oppression in a patriarchal system (Mohanty 1991; Brenner 1996; Zuhur 1992; Mule and Barthel 1992). Though social and political constraints and pressures would limit women’s choice, however, we should be aware that women who undergo Islamic revival activities might be demonstrating a conscious act toward a religious calling and this is a way to construct women’s subjectivity.

3-3 Introduction of Islamic Revival Organizations

In the 1970s, the Islamic revival movement shifted its platform from the university to the public sphere. It became a mainstream religious force in the larger social political

arena and continued to attract a substantial number of followers, which were not only limited to students but to people from all walks of life. This Islamic revivalism supported the emergence of Islamic organizations in Malaysia, i.e., ABIM, Darul Arqam, Jama'at Tabligh. Below, light will be shed on the historical trajectory of the various Islamic organizations in Malaysia, including the roles played by Muslim female members in these Islamic organizations. Furthermore, the Darul Arqam's context till the year of 2011 will be examined, as it is intimately linked with the emergence of the Obedient Wives Club, the core study case.

1. ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia)

ABIM first surfaced in 1970, the first ABIM's leader was Anwar; he was also one of the leaders of the National Organization of Muslim Students (PKPIM). The emergence of ABIM was under the impetus of some leaders of the National Organization of Muslim Students (PKPIM). PKPIM was formed to cater for the needs of Muslim students; it was inspired by the International Islamic movements. A prominent leader of PKPIM, Anwar was always aware of the socio-political context of Muslim society, and aggressively joined campus, as well as the external, political activities. On August 8th 1971, at the PKPIM 10th Annual meeting, held in the Islamic Faculty of the UKM, Anwar urged the creation of a new platform, namely the ABIM, for the continuation of the Islamic struggle (Monutty 1989: 74). As seeing the external cultural influences gradually drawing Malaysian Muslims away from Islam, he advocated continuing the Islamic struggle off campus, expanding its force to the wider public area. Thus, in late 1971, they approached to the Registrar of Society and eventually ABIM became a legalized youth organization.

In the late 1970s, ABIM consisted of approximately 50,000 members and had more than 150 branches including some in the United Kingdom, The United States, Egypt, and New Zealand (Monutty 1989: 94). In Malaysia, its members were mainly urban-educated, middle-class youth, students and young professionals. Some of them hailed from rural villages. They migrated to urban areas for higher education and wage employment. The ABIM also included those who were sent for education overseas. Many ABIM members actively maintained contact with their counter-parts in the Middle East, even after they had returned to their homeland (Ong 1995). The establishment of the ABIM enabled graduate students from universities and colleges to resume their participation in Islamic activities.

The vast majority of ABIM's female supporters were derived from a group of overseas educated women with professional status. These members reverted to the Islamic faith, choosing to cover the part of body deemed 'immodest', they dressed in the loose robes, wore shoulder-length *mini-telekung* (small scarf covering head and neck), which framed the face and hung from a tight headband that bounded the hair in place. ABIM's female leaders bore the responsibility for the development of HELWA, ABIM's female branch; they actively launched conferences and lectures for its female members. ABIM's female leaders placed greater weight on women's primary role of 'good mother' and 'good wife' rather than emulating the excessive liberation derived from a secular and western milieu. They suggested that women could pursue a career as long as the job did not conflict with the women's primary roles. ABIM's meetings also revolved around Muslim women's roles in education, child-rearing and in creating a social conscience in general. The most famous ABIM's female member is Mariam Jameela. She was a New York Jew who converted to Islam. She was an active author, writing books to criticize the west and embrace the Islamic faith (Nagata 1984:99-100).

The conspicuous difference between ABIM members and others was their emphasis on direct engagement with holy texts, the *Koran, Sunnah, Hadith*, without the guide of *ulama* (Ong 1995). From ABIM's perspectives the phenomena of moral decline, social injustice, and excessive materialism were the by-products of westernization, thus they rejected those western elements that impinged upon social harmony. ABIM inclined towards the 'pure' and 'fundamental' teaching of Islam. Meanwhile its members also integrated themselves in the on-going modernity trajectory such as pursuing scientific and technological advancement. ABIM accepted modernization elements as long as they complied with the core values of Islam (Monutty 1989:79-80; Nagata 1980:425).

The ABIM launched a number of private schools named *Yayasan Anda Akademik*, Islamic kindergartens and nurseries that aimed to ameliorate the drop-out problems and fortify *tarbiyah* (religious) education²⁷ among Malay students. In *Yayasan Anda Akademik*, the classroom was divided into two. Female students sat together as a group, separating from male students. According to Anwar (1987:18), the first graduates of *Yayasan Anda* in

²⁷ Apart from imparting knowledge from books, *tarbiyah* focuses on the creating and development of character in Malay students.

1974 were believed to be among the first women on the University of Malaya campus to be seen wearing the *mini-telekung*.

Besides that, In order to increase the awareness and consciousness among the public, the ABIM organized a series of activities encompassing talks, symposia, seminars, publication of books and periodicals associated with Islamic principles and values. They promoted Islam as *din* (way of life) and condemned the activities; sales of alcoholic drinks, gambling, prostitution, and corruption, that transgressed Islamic rules. ABIM also cooperated with other Islamic organizations to carry out their activities. For example, in cooperation with WAMY (World Assembly of Muslim Youth), ABIM provided free religious classes and distributed reading material in English so as to augment the Islamic knowledge of new converts and non-Muslims (Jamil 1988:136-141).

In March 1982, Anwar moved to join the secular-oriented UMNO, under the administration of Dr. Mahathir Muhammad. Anwar's sudden departure apparently placed ABIM in a quandary, a scathing rebuke among ABIM members was directed at Anwar, claiming his betrayal and infidelity to the principles of Islamic struggle. After Anwar's resignation as president of ABIM, ABIM elected its deputy president, Siddiq Fadil, as the new president (Monutty 1989:105-107).

Despite the departure of Anwar being a great menace to ABIM, ABIM still maintained its popularity within the Muslim community. Overall, its credibility as an independent Islamic movement was well preserved throughout the period of Islamic resurgen

2. Jama'at Tabligh

Jama'at Tabligh was founded in India around 1927 by an ascetic named Malauna Muhammad Ilyas. In Malaysia, it was a branch of an India-based international network. Its nerve center and organizational stimulus were located at Nizamuddin, in Delhi. Initially, Tabligh's influences permeated into the Malay Peninsula in 1950s through Indian mubaligh (missionaries), attracting a group of adherents from Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. Its members encompassed Malays but the majorities were Indian and Pakistani (Jamil 1988).

Unlike ABIM, Jama'at Tabligh's movement directed its attention on men and prohibited the participation of women. The female family members of the adherents were required to veil themselves, and to communicate with non-related males only through intermediaries or, at least, by averting the head and avoiding eye to eye contact. Women were neither allowed to work nor leave the house without the permission of their husbands. They could hold their prayers and religious discussion in the seclusion of their own homes. These wives of adherents were counseled not to burden their husband and must fully support their husband's will in participating in Jama'at Tabligh's activities or undertaking duties as missionaries away from home. However, women who were included in Jama'at Tabligh's ideologies always faced ambiguities and difficulties. Jama'at Tabligh's edict that women should remain at home inevitably came into conflict with the occupational choice of those highly educated, urban and middle class women. These women claimed that considerable personal adjustment occurred between them (Jamil 1988:182; Nagata 1980:422; 1984:117-118).

Jama'at Tabligh's ideology was irrelevant to the political or economic process; in addition, they refrained from becoming involved in anything perceived as being unclean and ungodly, as well as materialism and secularism. They strengthened religious values and inner spiritual development instead. Jama'at Tabligh's members were obligated to undergo self-purification and must be faithful to God (Abu Bakar 1981: 1049). They rejected individual leadership and personality cults but promoted egalitarianism and asceticism. *itijimak* national congregations were constantly held in different parts of the country, under the leadership and guideline of an *ulama* or teacher. The sermons and discussions were conducted in Urdu or Tamil languages, or less commonly in Arabic, but they recruited Malay-speaking lecturers or translators to impart religious knowledge. Jama'at Tabligh also encouraged religious retreats; its activities helped to cultivate an Islamic brotherhood, solidarity and humility among the members. They performed seclusion overnight or longer in the Mosques, and also practiced sharing food, accommodation and discussed religious problems and experiences. During the mainstream period of the *dakwah* movement, Jama'at Tabligh succeeded in expanding its influences from urban to rural areas (Nagata 1980:421-422, 1982:50).

Jama'at Tabligh adherents had been estimated to number approximately 5,000 people in west Malaysia. The adherents were required to fully commit themselves to

Jama'at Tabligh's activities. Some of the congregations lasted for a day and a night, three days and three nights or more. In some instances, adherents were prohibited from contacting outsiders. Adherents were expected to participate in the Jama'at Tabligh tour of three days per month, forty days in a year or even four months in the life time. In addition, adherents were mandated to include in this tour a visit to the Delhi headquarters (Nagata 1984: 118-119). The Jama'at Tabligh ideology was disconnected from the reality of society, adherents always found difficulty in committing themselves fully to its activities. Such undiplomatic manners in propagating Islam caused discontent from adherents. In some cases, some adherents even decided to disassociate themselves from the movement. Consequently the membership was always a crucial problem for Jama'at Tabligh, and they were always struggling to retain members.

In the ensuing years, Jama'at Tabligh worked for greater legitimacy as a Malay, rather than an Indian, organization. They created an apparent social distance with the Indian Muslim associations, for example, the Muslim League and Iqbal Association. Jama'at Tabligh displayed themselves as a representative of the Malay community, and drew upon the rhetoric of Islamic unity to acquire support from Malays. However, there were still Malays who vehemently criticized the Jama'at Tabligh for revering their Delhi headquarters more than Mecca, and persistently referring to their Mosques as 'Pakistani' and railed against the 'pure' Islamic way of life (Nagata 1980:423). Jama'at Tabligh was considered a misfit and limited in its effectiveness in the Islamic movement, however, Jama'at Tabligh's influences in the mainstream of *dakwah*—awakening the importance of Islam force—was not to be obliterated.

3. Darul Arqam

Darul Arqam is one of the religious organizations that had a prolonged impact on Malaysian society. It underwent three reformation stages. Initially, it formed up under name of Darul Arqam. But in the ensuing years Darul Arqam faced great suppression from the Malaysian government, hence in 1977 it shifted to a new business entity called Rufaqa. Today it is well known as Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad (GISB). The president of Global Ikhwan is Khatijah Aam, who is also a member of the Obedient Wives Club. Hence, we could see that the emergence of the Obedient Wives Club has close links with Darul Arqam. Below, I shall delve into the historical context of Darul Arqam.

(i) Darul Arqam's Era

Darul Arqam, which also could be called 'House of Arqam' is named after a friend of the Prophet who gave away his house to be turned into a center for Islamic missionary activities (Abu Bakar 1981:1041). Darul Arqam emerged in 1968, and was locally based. The leader of Darul Arqam was Ustaz Ashaari, who hailed from Pilin village, Negeri Sembilan. Ustaz Ashaari practiced polygamous marriage; he had four wives and more than thirty children.²⁸ His wives were members of Darul Arqam, normally taking care of his daily's needs and helping him in running the administration and propagating Islamic works. Initially, Ustaz Ashari was an active member in PAS at the age of twenty-one. After ten years in PAS, he felt that the organization was unable to fulfill his wider aims of Islamic struggle, hence, he decided to establish his own organization in 1969 (Abdurrahman R. Effendi and Gina Puspita 2003:31-33).

Ustaz Ashaari as a *pondok* (traditional village religious boarding school) teacher always intended to set up a religious school. However, in the Mid-1970s, a secular education trend prevailed over the religiously oriented; concurrent with this was a serious financial problem that adversely affected the rural religious school. Ustaz Ashaari had no alternative but to seek collaboration with a group of Malay lecturers, mostly from the National University's Faculty of Islamic studies (Nagata 1982:50; 1984:104; Hussein 1988:196). Through this, in 1972, he eventually set up the first residential commune in Sungai Penchala, situated seventeen miles from Kuala Lumpur. The commune consisted of Darul Arqam's members houses, a *madrasah* (school), a mosque, a shopping center, and a number of cottage-industry style factories, which conformed to the Islamic social system of the Prophet's era (Abu Bakar 1981:1048).²⁹

Darul Arqam followers were innumerable civil servants and also students, who were mostly urban, highly educated and had a university background, from the National University's Faculty of Islamic Studies in particular. Darul Arqam placed great attention on the proper gender relations amongst its members. They promoted Arab-style costume and deemed 'green' a holy color. The men normally wore Arab-style robes, white turbans

²⁸ Please refer to <http://www.guangming.com.my/node/113044> (Guang Ming Jit Poh 2011 / 09 / 11).

²⁹ Please also refer to <http://www.guangming.com.my/node/111996> (Guang Ming Jit Poh 2011 / 08 / 28).

and leather sandals, while the women completely covered themselves with a loose *jubah* and *mini-telekung*. Female followers frequently donated their labor in Arqam's factories, supervised in the school and prepared meals for the hostel and visitors who came for religious retreats (Nagata 1980:418, 1982:50). Young girls were taught to segregate from men in the community, and undertook training in subjects such as sewing and cookery, which was compatible with the appropriate role behaviors of Islamic teaching (Nagata 1984:106). A Marriage bureau was set up for match-making purposes and marriages were arranged. The practice of polygamous marriage was encouraged in Darul Arqam (Hussein 1988:230).

As a movement, Darul Arqam was considered to be Sufi-oriented. Its weekly activities included *fardu ain* classes which focused on Koranic *tafsir* (exegesis), *tauhid* (theology), and *fiqh* (jurisprudence). In the class, female members sat on the floor above the auditorium, listening to the teaching of male speaker through the close-circuit television. They segregated themselves from male members. If a male member walked into the room to set up the television, these female members would hide their faces by turning away their heads (Anwar 1987: 87). Darul Arqam advocated a literal return to the *Koran*, *Sunnah and Hadith*, practicing collective responsibility in their everyday affairs, and communal discussions were carried out to discuss communal welfare. Darul Arqam called for a 'resistance' to the decadent cultures from the West, urging its followers to give up the corrupt life and pay attention to moral and spiritual cultivation. Financially, Darul Arqam's mainstay was mainly from follower's contributions. Followers normally extracted a tithe from their monthly salary to supply Darul Arqam's fund, as if *zakat* (Muslim religious taxes) and *sedekah* (Muslim religious charities) in the Koran's teaching. In addition, they performed economic self-sufficiency (Nagata 1984: 107).³⁰

Darul Arqam was involved in agricultural projects such as cultivation of *padi* (paddy), so as to raise sustainable foods for consumption by the community. They also set up a number of factories to produce *halal* products, for instance, soy and chili sauce, toothpaste, drinks, noodles, kitchen ware, medicines and also published Islamic books and cassettes of religious lectures. Darul Arqam followers were urged to preserve a positive attitude and involve themselves in the economic development based entirely on Islamic

³⁰ Please refer to <http://www.guangming.com.my/node/113044> (Guang Ming Jit Poh 2011 / 09 / 11).

principles. Followers were welcome to work in any of its premises and would be provided certain materials and foods as return. In 1976, Darul Arqam began to run its own school. In order to adapt to the trajectory of modernity, Darul Arqam's leaders integrated Islamic education into the secular stream. Secular subjects related to agriculture, and mechanical and electrical skills were conducted according to Islamic principles. Darul Arqam's first clinic was established in the Kuala Lumpur area two years later. The clinic doctors were those volunteer followers who had received a medical education in western countries, and also Malay *bidan* (midwife) who practiced traditional treatment. They employed modern and traditional Malay medicines and modes of treatments. Pregnant women could always elect to give birth by using either modern or traditional modes of treatment (Nagata 1980: 418-419). Evidently, it showed that Darul Arqam did not exclude modern technologies, as long as they were used selectively and were compatible with the *Koran, Hadith and Sunnah*.

Darul Arqam's activities continued to expand into the international arena. In the 1980s, the demand for Darul Arqam products, services and publications rose dramatically. It succeeded in building up business networks in Australia, Southeast Asian, Uzbekistan, Europe, and the United State, to name a few (Abdurrahman R. Effendi and Gina Puspita 2003:51). Darul Arqam also managed to create the conglomerate Al-Arqam group of companies (AGC) which, in 1993, consisted of twenty-two business sections. It is noteworthy that women, normally regarded as being devoid of autonomy had been given significance roles. They became the controllers of *Solehah* Enterprise under the Darul Arqam's business circuit, which had fifteen branches and assets totaling RM 0.5 million (Ahmad Fauzi 2003:140).

Clearly, Darul Arqam's socio-economic map and political agenda was transnationally oriented. Darul Arqam brought contagious effects to the Malaysia community, including university students, politicians, and civil servants. Three lecturers and approximately thirty students of the University of Science, Malaysia, were reported to be involved in Darul Arqam, a Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman also pointed out that an average of five hundred civil servants in each of thirty states became Darul Arqam's followers. In the same vein, the son of the former

Prime Minister, Tamrin Ghafar also conceded his adherence to Darul Arqam.³¹ In mid-1994, Darul Arqam was even suspected of having formed a 313-men ‘suicide Squad’, codenamed the ‘Badr army’ in Bangkok, for the sake of taking over power in Malaysia and reforming its Islamic empire.³²

Thereafter, Darul Arqam was at stake. The government publicly criticized Darul Arqam for deviating from Islamic principles and caused profound damages to the public. They revoked Ustaz Ashaari’s passport and sought cooperation from neighboring governments to help suppress Darul Arqam. Ustaz Ashaari finally left Malaysia and went to live in exile in Thailand for seven years. On September 2, 1994, Ustaz Ashaari and a group of his followers were apprehended by the Thai police in northern Thailand, and handed over to Malaysia authority. Subsequently, Ustaz Ashaari was detained without trial under the Internal Security Act (ISA). Eventually, on October 20, 1994, The Islamic Center officially announced that Darul Arqam was an illegal organization, thus banning all its activities. There were raids held across Darul Arqam’s communes to root out the great influences of Darul Arqam (Ahmad Fauzi 2009b: 157-158).³³

Consequently, Darul Arqam’s standing had plunged. After sixty days detainment, Ustaz Ashaari was released but placed in a restricted residence in Rawang, located in Selangor, and later in Labuan, Sabah for ten years. On October 31, 1994, Darul Arqam management officially announced dissolution.³⁴ Since then, there had only been sporadic groups of Darul Arqam’s members, distributed over a wide area of Malaysia.

(ii) Rufaqa’s Era

In reality, the national ban on Darul Arqam was not exhaustive. The overseas counterparts of Darul Arqam continued to expand its influences globally. Darul Arqam’s oversea followers continued to pledge their loyalty to Ustaz Ashaari even though he was under detainment.

³¹Please refer to <http://www.guangming.com.my/node/113682> (Guang Ming Jit Poh 2011 / 09 / 18)

³²Please refer to <http://www.guangming.com.my/node/112489> (Guang Ming Jit Poh 2011 / 09 / 04)

³³Also, please refer to <http://www.guangming.com.my/node/113044> (Guang Ming Jit Poh 2011 / 09 / 11) and <http://www.guangming.com.my/node/114207> (Guang Ming Jit Poh 2011 / 09 / 25) and <http://www.guangming.com.my/node/114777> (Guang Ming Jit Poh 2011 / 10 / 02).

³⁴ Please refer to <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/5/14/nation/6261561&sec=nation> (The Star Online 2010 / 05 / 14)

After the three year banning period, in 1997, a group of former Darul Arqam's followers established a corporation in Malaysia named Rufaqa. According to Ahmad Fauzi (2009b: 158-159), Rufaqa was a private limited company with the headquarter located in Bandar Country Homes, Rawang, Selangor. Ustaz Ashaari became Rufaqa's executive chairman after being released ten years later, in 2004. Rufaqa developed herbal-based health products and its business network covers Indonesia, Jordan, Syria, Germany etc. The success of the Rufaqa business was brought to the public's attention again, as though Darul Arqam resurrected. Even further, there was a corollary spreading that Indonesia became the new hub for Darul Arqam's revival activities. Under the guise of transnational economies of scale, Rufaqa had succeeded in developing dramatically where 500 to 700 outlets specializing in small and medium size industries had been set up.

It was noteworthy that in the Rufaqa era, the management placed great emphasis on women's central roles. They recognized women's leadership ability and participation in economic affairs. Women were now taking responsibility for the company's financial affairs and could request career development as long as fulfilling their appropriate roles stated in Islamic principles, of being a 'good wife' and 'good mother'. In Rufaqa, some women became bureau deputy directors and unit managers. They frequently acted as spokeswomen and representatives of Rufaqa, attending press conferences and business meetings (Khadijah Aam, quoted in Ahmad Fauzi 2009a:457).

The establishment of Rufaqa raised the attention of the Islamic center again. Especially when Ustaz Ashaari's wife, Khadijah Aam launched a book titled '*Abuya Ashaari Muhammad Pemimpin Paling Ajaib di Zamannya* (Abuya Ashaari Muhammad, the Most Miraculous Leader of His Time) in Thailand. This book was deemed to be a challenge to the authority of the Malaysian government (Ahmad Fauzi 2009b:160). Rufaqa's business premises were kept under surveillance, and there were continuous raids on Rufaqa's activities by the Islamic center, time after time. However, Rufaqa continued to flourish even under great governmental suppression.

(iii) GISB's Era (Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad)

In the ensuing years, Rufaqa's movement was interrogated by the government for being heterodox, many states accused Rufaqa of promulgating a deviant Islamic teaching and causing social unease. In response to the great pressures, Rufaqa's management de-

registered the company to a new entity called Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad (GISB). GISB's management unanimously refuted the rumors saying that they were linked to the quest of Darul Arqam's revivalism. However, the public easily found conspicuous similarities of GISB, in term of its aims, activities and relational networks, to Darul Arqam. GISB also expanded its business circuits to Middle East routes, members were frequently travelling between several places and countries (Ahmad Fauzi 2009b:160).

Living up to the name of Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad, the organization became more assimilated into the mainstream of Malaysian society, creating an urban-friendly, women-friendly and less racialist socio-economic milieu. Again, women became more important compared with the Rufaqa's era in recapturing Muslim nation's lost glory. As Ustaz Ashaari's health had acutely deteriorated after the long period of restricted residence, his wife, Khadijah Aam then became the focal person, representing Ustaz Ashaari and bearing the full responsibilities of GISB's operation. This arrangement apparently located women in a significant position in the development of Islam.

In August 2009, Khadijah Aam set up the club named *Kelab Poligami* (polygamy club). The Polygamy club aimed at advocating the benefits of one-husband-multiple wives marriages. They offered matchmaking, wedding planning and counseling services to club members. Especially for single mothers, ex-prostitutes and women who thought that they were past the marriage age.³⁵ The Polygamy Club established branches across Malaysia, Indonesia, Europe, the Middle East etc. The Polygamy Club caused great controversy and became a *bête noire* of feminism associations in Malaysia. Darul Arqam returned to the limelight after setting up the *Kelab Poligami*.

On May 13, 2010, Ustaz Ashaari was certified dead due to a lung infection at the age of 73.³⁶ After the death of Ustaz Ashaari, the GISB came under the supervision of Khadijah Aam. A year later, Khadijah Aam established a club named *Kelab Taat Suami*

³⁵Please refer to <http://thestar.com.my/lifestyle/story.asp?file=/2009/9/12/lifefocus/4551382&sec=lifefocus> (The Star Online 2009 / 09 / 12) & <http://warkah.com/malaysia-polygamy-club/> (Warkah 2009 / 09 / 30)

³⁶Please refer to <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/al-arqams-abuya-dies> (The Malaysian Insider 2010 / 05 / 13) & <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/5/14/nation/6261561&sec=nation> (The Star Online 2010 / 05 / 14)

(Obedient Wives Club). The Emergence of the Obedient Wives Club sparked heated discussion throughout the nation.

As of today, the influence of Darul Arqam is still embedded in the social-political context of contemporary Malaysia. By means of the Obedient Wives Club, Malaysia has been engulfed in a wave of revivalism again. This time, women played significant roles in advocating the return to an Islamic way of life. Their call for following the Islamic gender moral order has brought profound impacts to Islamic society.

3-4 Sisters in Islam: The Emergence of the Islamic Women's Voices in the Society

Last but not least, it is worthwhile mentioning a women's activist group known as the Sisters in Islam (SIS).³⁷ As discussed previously, the Malaysian government contested the influences of the Islamic revivalism in the late-1960s and 1970s. While the influence of the dakwah movement became substantial in Malaysian society, the Malaysian government thus unavoidably began to adopt Islamic principles in its policies (Nagata 1980, 1982, 1984; Shamsul 1997; Mutalib 1993; Barraclough 1983; Camroux 1996).

The Islamic Family Laws, legislated in 1984 and enforced in 1987, were one of the crucial policies that revealed Malaysia's Islamization process. There was an assembly held to discuss the law and implementation related to Islamic Family Law. This earlier meeting thereby contributed to the surfacing of the SIS in 1989. Contrary to the Obedient Wives Club, SIS was a modern Islamic feminism group. The president of SIS is Zainah Anwar, who formerly worked as journalist. SIS members were urban Malay women with tertiary education. Some of them are lawyers, journalists, academics, analysts etc. SIS advocated gender equality and searched for solutions to any form of discrimination against Muslim women in the name of Islam. They provided legal aid to Muslim women who were facing marital problems. Furthermore, SIS had a large number of published works emphasizing Muslim women's rights and equal status to men within an Islamic context (Shuib 2005).

SIS was inclined towards liberal feminism though, urging emancipation of Muslim women which brought it into conflict with other religious organizations dominated by Muslim men, such as PAS and UMNO (Othman 2006). SIS argued that falsification and

³⁷ Please refer to Sisters in Islam's official website <http://www.sistersinislam.org.my/page.php?35>

forgery of *Hadith* occurred, thus they called for women's participation in the debate about Islamic truth and challenged man-made interpretations of Islamic doctrines (Sylva 2009: 184). Zainah Anwar, SIS president remarked that interpretation of the message of the Qur'an must include the voices and experiences of the community, men and women (Noriani 2003).

Despite causing great controversy, SIS was still able to expand its influence in society. The group was constantly holding meetings among members to study Al-Quran closely, looking afresh at the verses used as a source of laws discriminating against women. SIS advocacy work included creating memoranda to the government on law or policy reform, also sending letters to editors in Malay and English newspapers on current issues to educate the public and build up a constituency to support a more enlightened interpretation of Islam (Othman 2006). For example, SIS opposed Islamic concepts based on male-dominance where men were permitted to practice polygamy. SIS created memoranda on 'Reform of the Islamic Family Law on Polygamy'. The memorandum recommended that in order to impose a penalty of a minimum of RM1000 with a mandatory jail sentence of not less than four weeks to men who contracted polygamy without getting permission from the court (Zaitun 2002; Shuib 2005).

Moreover, SIS also organized seminars, workshops, public lectures, etc. to provide public education and increase public awareness toward Muslim women's right. For instance, the SIS organized a Regional Workshop on Islamic Family Law and Justice for Muslim women in 2001. There were activists, lawyers, policy makers from Asian countries and Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, etc. assembled to discuss the discrimination issue of women, cultivating better understanding of the principles of justice and equality and the changing realities of women's lives in the new millennium (Noraini 2003).

As an advocacy group, SIS had succeeded in mobilizing support and influencing laws and policies made in the name of Islam. They had helped to uplift the status of Muslim women in Malaysian society. In response to the emergence of the Obedient Wives Club, SIS lodged a great objection. The SIS acting executive director, Ratna Osman criticizes the Obedient Wives Club for indulging in 'cheap stunts' and failing to look at the

demands of society, which called for gender equality and progress in education.³⁸ She also pointed out that the Obedient Wives Club's views on marriage were an insult to the Al-Quran and God's teaching in Islam.³⁹ Apparently, SIS advocated the equal participation of women and men in the Islamic way of life. They showed that oppressive interpretations of the Al-Quran were influenced by cultural practices and values which regarded women as inferior and subordinate to men (Sisters in Islam: 1991).

In conclusion, the Islamic revivalism revolves around Malaysia, and is embedded in the very fabric of society. Since the surfacing of the *dakwah* movement, different Islamic groups have arisen which are inclined to Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic liberal feminism, or Islamic modernism in Malaysian society. These different Islamic voices have caused profound impacts and ambiguity for Muslim women's identity in Malaysia. Muslim women tend to be regarded as 'oppressed' in the ideological struggles between different groups. The Obedient Wives Club is a crucial example of this issue. By means of a case study of the Obedient Wives Club, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will make clear whether they are victims of a patriarchal-religion, or through participation in the Islamic movement, they have actually embraced their subjectivity in everyday life.

³⁸ Please refer to <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2011/10/14/nation/9697302&sec=nation> (The Star Online 2011 / 10 / 14)

³⁹ Please refer to <http://www.sbs.com.au/dateline/story/transcript/id/601375/n/Obedient-Wives-Club> (SBS Dateline 2011 / 10 / 30)

CHAPTER 4: ‘Conscientization’: Islam as *din*

As we saw in Chapter 3, the emergence of the *Obedient Wives Club* should not be regarded as strange phenomenon, contradicting the prevailing modern concepts. In fact, its emergence has an intimate link with Malaysia’s Islamic revivalism period. Starting in this chapter, the major changes that occurred in the lives of the OWC elite Muslim women as a result of their piety will be clarified. Also examined will be how these changes show their ability to act as subject constructors, giving themselves meaning, solace and dignity. Moreover, this analysis will also attempt to refute the stereotypes and biases that reinforce the perception of Muslim women as an inferior and oppressed group.

The OWC elite Muslim women’s participation in the Islamic movement is, in fact a kind of ‘conscientization’ experience in their journey through life. This ‘conscientization’ experience describes the changes undergone by OWC elite Muslim women during the wave of Islamic revivalism in the late-1960s and 1970s.

Previous chapters describe how the Malaysia government blindly emulated the western model of development and caused severe economic and social malaises, such as corruption and poverty in the Malay population. The Malay population began to adopt Islam as a ‘solution’ to resolve the crises that were occurring in modern society (Nagata 1980; Shamsul 1997; Mutalib 1993).

The OWC elite Muslim women that were interviewed are supporters of the Islamic revivalism call of the 1970s. Within a Malaysian socio-culture context, all ethnic Malays are defined as Muslim. They are ‘born to be’ instead of having the freedom to choose to be a Muslim.⁴⁰ With regard to the OWC elite Muslim women’s accounts, living in such a situation caused them to feel confused about their complex identity. The *dakwah* movement, served as an impetus for them to reaffirm their self-identity.

The OWC elite Muslim women refuse the definition of ‘born to be Muslim’. Through participation in the *dakwah* movement, they have raised their awareness in searching for self-identity. Participating in Darul Arqam enabled them to gain personal recognition and alleviate their self-doubt, deep confusion and anxiety associated with their

⁴⁰ Malay-Muslims live under two significant codes of conduct shaped by both Islam and *adat* (Malay customary law). While observing Islamic law in every aspect of life, there is also the customary law of *adat* that is applied in dealing with social relationships, including those between women and men (Ong 1995).

Muslim identity. Besides that, after being inspired and enlightened in Darul Arqam, OWC Muslim women begin to submit themselves to the Islamic way of life. They worked hard to deepen their own understanding of the commandments of Islam and fulfill their religious responsibilities, such as veiling themselves and accepting the practice of polygamous marriages.

In reacting to the chaos of modernity, they played the role of a social chaos crusher. They criticized the bad influence of western culture, advocating a return to 'Islam' and promoting the Islamic gender moral order to redress social unease. For them, the basic units of the society are the family units. Creating and maintaining family harmony helps to avoid the social malaises that could impinge on the stability of the country.

No doubt we could see that there are many public criticisms of the OWC elite Muslim women's decisions in the Islamic pietistic movement. They are always rendered as victims of the patriarchal-religious system which indulges in false consciousness. However, I argue that the OWC elite Muslim women do not adhere blindly to passive conformity. Instead, their decision to join the Islamic movement actually embodied self-reflexivity. OWC elite Muslim women started to pursue self-identity, followed by their decision to join different religious institutions, lastly participating in Darul Arqam and practicing the Islamic way of life. This process shows that OWC Muslim women actually apply freedom 'to create and construct, to wonder and to venture' (Freire 2002:68).

The great suppression by the government, being stigmatized by the non-Muslim and Muslim populations, also facing objections from family members does not hinder the OWC elite Muslim women from their quest for their own direction. They take the self-initiative to join in the Islamic revival movement, searching for the so called pure Islamic pathway. They question the relation between *adat* (Malay customary law) and Islam, understanding the real meaning of veiling, looking into the pros and cons of polygamy and monogamy for themselves, etc. This shows that they are a group of active, positive and highly motivated Muslim women who look for the unique creation of life. Apparently, they are different from those oppressed groups mentioned by Freire (2002:158), a person who has been 'determined from above' by a cultural of domination.

OWC elite Muslim women are reluctant to accept the implanted concept which Islamic values imposed from 'parent to children'. They are people who 'refuse to think and

say things as everybody else think and say, instead, they are able to think originally' (Fromm 1942). They are determined in their life choices, albeit knowing they would risk severe criticism. They are able to take responsibility in all decision making.

What is the most essential is that the OWC elite Muslim women's intention to quest for Islamic pietism led them to obtain a better transformation. As Freire (2002) mentioned, oppression hinders an individual's ability to pursue self-affirmation. However, what we can see is that the OWC elite Muslim women's choice to be Islamized does not limit the situation for them to perform. They are people who obtain self-affirmation and are able to exercise their own creativity, capacity and competency to sketch their life journey.

While playing a domestic role, OWC elite Muslim women do not overlook their responsibilities in contributing to the construction of a better society. They act as social agents to participate actively in the public sphere. Besides achieving self-actualization, OWC elite Muslim women are also responsible for creating mutual welfare in the Islamic communities. This shows that the Islamic way of life does not limit their ability to fulfill their potential ability. In fact, they have expressed their unique human individuality in the life in piety.

To further discuss this issue, this chapter explores the fact that the OWC elite Muslim women actively participate in the Islamic movement, reflecting their 'conscientization' process by which they 'enter the historical process as responsible subjects, become individuals who know and act to search for self-affirmation, rather than become objects that only know and act upon' (Freire 2002:36). In the Islamic pietistic movement, the OWC elite Muslim women search for knowledge, truth and wisdom. They have obtained personal changes that chart a path to a more resonant life for themselves.

4-1 'Aware', 'Inspired' and 'Enlightened'

As we have discussed, in the Malaysia socio-context, Islam is associated with *adat* (Malay customary law), there is no clear demarcation line between Islam and *adat*. Muslim children receive religious knowledge from their parents. The Islamic knowledge passed by parents is merely a set of rituals. Though Muslims perform the five pillars of Islam⁴¹, in

⁴¹ According to Ruthven (1997), the five pillars of Islam are Shahada (declaration of faith), Salat (worship), Zakat (compulsory charity), Sawm (the fast during Ramadan) and Haji (pilgrimage to Mecca).

fact, they do not have a true understanding of the Islamic doctrines. They do not adhere closely to the commandments of Islam in daily life.

The OWC elite Muslim women described in this study are pious Muslim women who veil themselves and adhere to Islamic principles; however, previously they in fact followed a similar trajectory. Before the surface of the *dakwah* period, they were not aware of their Muslim identity:

Previously...when I was young, I didn't really care about Islam...and followed the Islam teaching in daily life. My father and mother also didn't really care about this. Sometimes, we performed prayers, sometimes we didn't.

(Pn. Zakiah)

At that time...there was no dakwah...so I did not really practice the Islamic way of life...I didn't veil myself, I wore skirts. People also didn't care so much. You know...right? In Islam, we sembahyang [perform prayer] five times per day. But previously, we wouldn't care about this. Sometimes I performed, but sometimes I didn't. Although we are Muslim...but during that time, I just followed adat [Malay customary law] teaching, I didn't follow Al-Quran...even tutup aurat [veiling to protect modesty]...I seldom practiced...

(Pn. Hajah)

Even though my father is the Imam [prayer leader]...he taught me about Islam, but in fact I do not understand its real meaning. For example...perform prayer...yes...I do perform prayer, but actually I do not understand what is the importance of performing prayer. How to consider as a good prayer? Previously, I just performed prayer because of my parents, they asked me to do so. Sometimes, I was lazy, so I wouldn't perform. My parents are Muslims, but they are influenced by adat too...what they learn is not a 'pure Islam'...they were just afraid that people gossiped around, saying that we did not perform prayer...did not tutup aurat...they were afraid of shame...

(Pn. Abdullah)

In the ensuing years, the emergence of the Islamic revival movement, *dakwah* in Malaysia provided an opportunity for a large number of Muslims to confront their identity issues (Hussein 1988; Muzaffar 1987; Nagata 1984). My interviewee, Pn. Rohaida, who was also a participant in the *dakwah* movement, told me her story. Pn. Rohaida is 42 years old. Her occupation is a secondary school teacher. Simultaneously, she holds the position of female unit manager in Darul Arqam.⁴² During her free time, she helps to manage business premises located at Sungai Penchala's community. She is the first wife; there is another co-wife in her family.

In the beginning, I knew about Islam...through the same way which others knew about it...we treated it as a tradition. My father and mother are also Muslim...I was born in an Islamic family. But last time...I was not satisfied, I didn't like...why was I born to be a Muslim? People told me that Islam was a beautiful religion...but what was the beauty of Islam? I couldn't get it. How to prove this? They also said that if we followed Al-Quran and Hadith [Koranic exegesis], we then could enter heaven. But I see nowadays...so many Muslims...there are so many bad Muslims, They do not perform prayers...they commit crimes...men and women are flirting around. There are cases like baby abandonment, divorce...nobody cares about this. So I start to wonder...what is the purpose of becoming a Muslim? Just try to ask others...why do we need to veil? Some people just follow whatever people do...traditional...but do not try to know the real meaning of veiling. Even some people...they just choose to veil when outside but take it off at home...all sorts of things. As a human being, I am not satisfied with this...What is the meaning of becoming a Muslim? Last time...I was so in doubt...I had religion classes at primary school...but I was confused. Even during secondary school, I had religion classes in the evening. I learned to perform prayers...to read Al-Quran. But I only did it during religion

⁴²The name of Darul Arqam, Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad (GISB) and Obedient Wives Cub (OWC) will alternatively be used by my interviewees throughout the whole interviews. For them, the three institutions are intertwined and associated with each other. It is no different to mention either one of these names.

classes...I seldom practiced in the daily life, because I didn't really understand why I needed to do this?

(Pn. Rohaida)

During the wave of Islamic revivalism, *dakwah* adherents started to advocate Islamic piety and distanced themselves from *adat* (Malay customary law) influences. It was the first time Muslims felt confused in this new situation. Doubts gradually increased. Eventually, it led to Muslims starting to be aware of, and re-examine, their ambiguous Muslim identity.

The Islamization trend in Malaysia ran parallel to the global Islamic revival movement. In Malaysian society, many religious institutions were set up in response to the local *dakwah*'s call. A vast number of Muslims chose to enter religious institutions in the late 1960s. According to Ong's study (1995), during the *dakwah* period, there were many Muslim women who were victims of the patriarchal religion. Muslim women were forced to veil themselves and conform to the Islamic movement, or else they would be subjected to pressure and outright threat.

However, we should also be alert to the fact that Muslims who join Islamic movements could be undergoing a process of subjectivity formation. For instance, Muslim women have successfully cultivated their religious ideas through the Islamic pietistic movement (Sylva 2009); in addition, there is political mobilization by Muslim women through the Islamic movement (Rinaldo 2010). The following discussion shows that OWC elite Muslim women were influenced by this wave of Islamic revivalism. They raised their awareness of their Muslim identity and decided to join the Islamic revival movement.

This awareness is tantamount to the concept elucidated by Fromm (1964)—awareness leads people to act in a certain way by knowing they are conscious executors, rather than being forced to act blindly. People go through a self-learning process to obtain a sense of awareness. They immerse themselves directly in real-life situations, experiencing and experimenting with themselves.

Looking back to the 1970s, the Islamic revivalism period, the success of the Muslim community in the countries of the Middle East helped to raise Malaysian Muslims' awareness toward the Islamic revival movement. In response to the Malay dilemmas such

as economic imbalance, corruption and excessive greed, Malaysian Muslims called for a local *dakwah* movement. The Muslims gained understanding on various branches of Islam and joined different religious institutions during the *dakwah* period. In addition, they were also exposed to and evaluated various forms of religious knowledge and worldviews that were operative in the *dakwah* period.

OWC Muslim women who were former participants in the *dakwah* movements revealed similar stories. They acted as subjects representing their own interests in wider society. They experienced a self-learning process before joining Darul Arqam. They joined, compared and criticized every religion institutions such as ABIM, and PAS. Their decisions were reached through self-awareness.

Through their narratives, Darul Arqam was distinct from other religious institutions. The Islamic way of life promoted in Darul Arqam covered every aspect of their lives. Its teachings heightened a pursuit of virtuous life rather than attaining material wealth and political achievements. The philosophy of Darul Arqam had inspired and enlightened OWC Muslim women, and led them to become members of Darul Arqam.

I started to know about Darul Arqam during my study at university. I did not join it...as a kid...playing around...for fun [without second thoughts]. I was serious in my decision. I joined Darul Arqam because of Islam. It was because the Islam promulgated by Ustaz Ashaari [the former leader of Darul Arqam] was so beautiful. At that time, I saw others also advocating Islam...such as PAS, ABIM. When I studied at university, I got into closer contact with those Islamic institutions too...but Darul Arqam showed me the beauty of Islam. ABIM...it focuses on running seminars...but Darul Arqam...it emphasizes the practice of an Islamic way of life. It puts into practice...for instances...in the economics aspect...we have so many halal [lawful, good and permissible] businesses...in term of education, we teach our children to tutup aurat, parents must serve as role models as well... Islam emphasizes kinship, so we practice love and care for everyone...we fulfill what we have promised! In term of cultural development, we organize expo [exposition, a large-scale public exhibition]...publish books and CDs

[compact discs]. Compared to others...PAS...ABIM...they just focus on politics...

(Pn. Zakiah)

...naturally, I am Muslim, but I didn't know much about Islam. When I became adolescent, I started to search for the truth about Islam. At that time, there were not so many Islamic institutions. When I was 12 years old, I tried to look for the true Islam. I joined PAS, ABIM and also other institutions...I joined all those institutions. At last, I decided to join Darul Arqam. I met Ustaz Ashaari, the leader of Darul Arqam. I tried to compare...I could see there were so many differences between Darul Arqam and ABIM, also [compare] with those teaching group in mosques. For instances...in terms of sembahyang [perform prayers], Darul Arqam emphasizes performing group prayers. We never perform prayer alone...it creates a sense of togetherness. If we look at Ustaz Ashaari's family, he has four wives and forty-three children. None of them are neglected...After seeing this...a leader who can lead his family, his organizations so well...I started to fall into Darul Arqam. So I decided to join...

(Pn. Zainah)

During my study at university, I joined Darul Arqam's activities. I heard so much about Islam from other institutions...but those just talk only and never put the Islamic teachings into practice. So I tried to follow Darul Arqam's road shows held around Malaysia. From then on, I realized that Darul Arqam was different from other institutions...Darul Arqam...there are so many economic activities run under the name of Islam. It conforms to the Islamic concept...the Islamic way of life. I realize that Islamic teaching actually could be applied to our daily life...there are so many Islamic systems that could be used in our daily life...such as economics system, polygamy system...and we have the Obedient Wives Club...

(Pn. Faridah)

In modern society, a multitude of people refrain from change because they are afraid of being different from others; and therefore feel lonely and become socially isolated.

They give up their individual self and tend to adopt entirely the role assigned to them by cultural patterns so that they could become exactly as all others are. They pretend that there is only one kind of role they can ever be (Fromm 1942:160). These kind of people, in Sarte's terms, are those who have self-deception and false consciousness (Sarte, quoted in Tong 1989:197).

In contrast to the above, the OWC elite Muslim women are the people who are free to 'think, feel and act as they please' (Fromm 1942). While Islamic pietistic movements are assumed to be tools of oppression, the OWC elite Muslim women's participation in the Islamic revival movement in fact enlightened them to become independent thinkers. They are determined to search for self-affirmation and refuse to act as 'automaton'; who is defined by Fromm (1964) as: 'a person who gives up his individuality and acts identically with millions of other automatons around him, so as to ward off his fear of being alone or anxious'.

Without indulging in false consciousness, the OWC elite Muslim women are conscious of the consequences of their acts and are ready to bear the risks which occur in their lives. Despite there being innumerable difficulties when they join Darul Arqam, a strong determination demonstrated by the OWC elite Muslim women eventually brings about change to them. The act which derives from genuine feelings and thoughts further creates a sense of happiness and satisfaction to their life. We could see this from Pn. Faridah's story, as stated below.

Pn. Faridah remembered vividly that she faced countless obstacles when she first joined Darul Arqam. Pn. Faridah is 42 years old. She works as a pharmacist. In Darul Arqam, she is a committee member. Pn. Faridah is a first wife while there are three co-wives for her husband. She knew about Darul Arqam when she studied at university. She describes how Darul Arqam was once accused of being an illegal religious group that promulgated deviant Islamic teaching. Students were kept under surveillance at the Universities. There were raids on Darul Arqam's activities everywhere. She was once arrested by the Religion Department in Perak state.

No doubt...there are so many challenges and difficulties. It's not easy for me to keep on going! At that time...lecturers didn't like...Islam...they thought that Islam rosak [damaged] students' brains... There were too

many challenges...the outsiders [non-members of Darul Arqam] were against us...and the government was against us! The government banned our business. Just imagine...there were great threats! There was a time I was at Perak...the Religion Department brought me back for investigation. I was interrogated by them from night until morning...

(Pn. Faridah)

It was crystal clear that Pn. Faridah's decision to join Darul Arqam brought difficulties to her life. However, through her participation in the Islamic revival movement, she gained an understanding of the situation and used her own judgment to make wise decisions. Though Pn. Faridah was interrogated by the police, her life of piety led her to obtain a strong conviction to join Darul Arqam rather than simply follow the opinion from others.

Although there were great challenges...I worked hard to cope with it. I put great effort into seeking for the meaning of life. It was not for fun [joined Darul Arqam], or else I won't be able to keep on going...I would give up. It was a hard time...but I told myself, if I wanted to follow the true way, so this was what I had to pay for it. If I just joined it for fun, I won't be able to continue [to remain in Darul Arqam]... I felt the strength inside me, I had confidence that it was a true pathway...it could guarantee me a safe life [spiritual security]. I saw the beauty of Islam...it drove me to keep on going. I couldn't bear to lose it again.

(Pn. Faridah)

Pn. Sharifah further showed that she was so determined to join Darul Arqam even though her parents were against it. She weighed different factors and considered various opinions before making her decision. Pn. Sharifah is 47 years old. She is an Indonesian. Currently, she manages the Global Ikhwan's business premises in Singapore and Jordan. Pn. Sharifah is wife number three and she has three co-wives⁴³, they form a big polygamous family in the Rawang community.

⁴³ Pn. Sharifah's co-wives, Pn. Aminah (1st wife) and Pn. Laila (4th wife) are also my interviewees.

She got to know about Darul Arqam during her university life in Indonesia. At that time, Darul Arqam sent newspapers, magazines and booklets to Indonesia for promulgation purposes. Pn. Sharifah obtained a better understanding of Darul Arqam's teachings from these reading materials. She continued to communicate with the representatives of Darul Arqam in Malaysia via mail and the reading material she constantly received from Darul Arqam helped to augment her Islamic knowledge. Around 1989, the leader of Darul Arqam, Ustaz Ashaari paid a visit to Indonesia. Pn. Sharifah grabbed the chance to interact with Ustaz Ashaari and reveal her decision to join Darul Arqam. She quit her study at university and moved to Malaysia. In 1990, she married the son of Ustaz Ashaari and started her journey with God. Life in piety led Pn. Sharifah to become more confident and able to determine her own life.

In the beginning...my parents didn't agree and scolded me...they didn't understand...that's why they didn't allow me to join Darul Arqam...there were so many outsiders [non members of Darul Arqam] accusing Darul Arqam of being a deviant group, so my parents didn't allow me to join! But after I met Ustaz Ashaari...I gained an understanding about true Islam...so I decided to go on my way! I didn't follow blindly...I put in effort to understand about Darul Arqam, about its education system...I fell into it, so I decided to move to Malaysia. You know...there are two education purposes in Darul Arqam, firstly to become a slave-servant of God; secondly, to revive Islam...but it doesn't mean that we use weapons for battle...No...to revive Islam...means we put effort to organizing halal expos [exposition, a large-scale public exhibition], to promulgate Islamic teaching...I am interested in this. It makes my life meaningful. So, at that time...I persisted in my choice...but...of course...at the same time, I also showed my parents, what the real life meant in Darul Arqam. After knowing that I did well, they finally accepted me...

(Pn. Sharifah)

The Islamic revival movement during the *dakwah* period seemed to disrupt the established order of the traditional Malay community; but it was actually a chance for Muslims to re-examine the Islamic teachings they had been taught. It brought substantial

change to Muslims. A large number of the Muslims had been inspired to become involved in the Islamic way of life.

In this study, the OWC elite Muslim women presented similar stories. They refused to become entrenched in low-awareness living and started to work hard to discover the real purpose of life by practicing amore Islamic way of life.

4-2 Submitting to the Islamic Way of Life

After raising awareness of their Muslim identity, and being enlightened by Darul Arqam's philosophy, the OWC elite Muslim women started to submit themselves to the Islamic way of life. They adhered strictly to the commandments of Islamic teachings, like choosing to veil themselves and entering into a polygamous marriage. Despite their decisions to live in accordance with the Islamic way, they encountered obstacles and difficulties in the earlier stage, but they have shown their ability to resolve every hardship they faced. Through the understanding of their decision to practice veiling and their acceptance of entering into polygamous marriage, this study demonstrates that OWC elite Muslim women could actually act and reflect upon their world so as to transform it (Freire 2002). They consider the predicament periods as a test to re-examine their thinking and influence their actions. They believe that the Islamic way of life will help them to get a better transformation in the long run.

1. Veiling

In many scholars' studies, veiling is a 'tool' helping to construct Muslim women's subjectivity (Brenner 1996; Killian 2003; Ho 2006). Muslim women who choose to veil in fact are similar to a person who is able to 'apprehend, criticize and transform social reality rather than being deluded by false consciousness' (Rathner 2013).

In Malaysia, prior to the *dakwah* movement, *tutup aurat* (veiling to protect modesty) was not common within the Muslim community. Veiling, especially a face veil, was framed as deviant practice which was irrelevant to the cultural context of the 1960s. When a wave of Islamic revivalism flooded into Malaysia in the late 1960s, Darul Arqam Muslim women in the Kuala Lumpur area served as pioneers by advocating the practice of veiling. The movement led to a large number of Muslim women developing their self-awareness and they thus began to veil.

However, this advocacy simultaneously caused conflict among Muslim populations and invoked great controversy in Malaysian society. In 1985, the government of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed had shown displeasure with the veiling trend among Muslim women. Muslim women employees were urged to 'lift up the veil' as the Malaysian government found it unsuitable in Malaysia. In addition, universities also banned the veiling practice. For them, the veiling was a tradition for Muslims in the Middle East. Rafidah Aziz, who held the position of the minister of public enterprise and was president of the women's wing of Mahathir's UMNO, warned that disciplinary action would be taken against women who wore veil to class or at work.⁴⁴

At that time, OWC elite Muslim women who conformed to the veiling practice were reprimanded by their parents as their act was defined as deviant in society. As Ong (1995) elucidated, in traditional Malay society, parents/elders/men were considered to be superior people who had power over the children/youngsters/women; the children/youngsters/women were expected to show their deference and were prohibited from challenging parental authority. In term of religion, the Islamic knowledge imposed upon children/youngsters/women was completely based on parents/elders/men's accrued wisdoms; it lacked children/youngsters/women's self-reflective participation. In other words, the belief in Islam was merely a kind of 'implant' to children/youngsters/women because they did not have their own understanding of the commandments of Islam.

Nevertheless, in this study, the OWC elite Muslim women's action to veil had actually displayed they were Muslim pioneers who could think independently and negotiate the conditions in which they lived. They were different from their older generations. They resisted the 'implantation' of Islamic teachings, querying the authenticity of Islamic knowledge passed from the parent and traditional religious teachers to them. They engaged in self-reflexivity, involving directly in the process of searching for Islamic knowledge. In fact, they were capable of 'naming the world' (Freire 2002:88), also knowing 'what I want' and 'who I am' (Fromm 1942: 122).

Joining the Islamic revival movement enabled the OWC elite Muslim women to construct the identity of pious Muslim women. They felt confident in taking care of their

⁴⁴ Please refer to http://articles.latimes.com/1985-04-07/news/mn-27527_1_face-veil (Los Angeles Times 1985/04/07)

real interest as human beings analogous to Brenner's (1996) study which stated that veiling was considered as one way for Muslim women to feel that they were capable of controlling their life and their choices.

Furthermore, the OWC elite Muslim women's exposures to the global Islamic revivalism trend tended to grant them a sense of honor and pride. They viewed themselves as Muslim pioneers who obtained a new level of understanding about the true pathway of Islam comparable with others. They regarded themselves as role models for the Islamic community. They were distinct from those Muslim women who had a sense of inferiority and powerlessness.

Pn. Zainah aptly presented this similar experience. Pn. Zainah is 45 years old. She works as a teacher in Darul Arqam's kindergarten. Meanwhile, she also holds the position of female unit manager. She is responsible for the female members' welfare in Rawang community. She is a second wife and she has two co-wives in her family. Pn. Zainah has been following Darul Arqam since she was adolescent. She said that in the early stage of the *dakwah* period, though the public seemed to treat her as deviant woman due to her veiling practice, she persisted in maintaining her own stand. From her perspective, the reason for the public being against the veiling practice was they did not understand the truth of Islam. Pn. Zainah's critique was based on Islamic knowledge and her own experiences observed through the participation in the Islamic revival movement. Regarding herself as a Muslim pioneer, she thus had intended to educate the public about the truth of Islam. She felt proud and honored by adhering persistently to the Islamic teaching.

Once, when I started to know about Islam...veiling was not common practice. People didn't do that. During that time...when I started to veil myself, others always looked at me! They thought that I was weird. But I won't feel inferior, instead...I told myself, veiling was taught by Islam, so I should feel proud as I have fulfilled God's will. This is the right model of Islam. I showed to them...

(Pn. Zainah)

Pn. Rohaida's story shows that how a participation in the Islamic movement had developed her own awareness of veiling, namely being Islamized, rather than blindly adhering to and following her parent's commands. Pn. Rohaida got to know Darul Arqam

during her study at University of Arizona, United States. At that time, *dakwah* had begun. It was a time when Darul Arqam's teams paid a visit to the Malaysian students in the United States. Pn. Rohaida participated in Darul Arqam's activities, and obtained a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings. Eventually, she chose to join Darul Arqam. After two years staying in United State, she applied to be transferred back to Malaysia. This was because she had difficulty in following the Islamic pathway in an alien country.

After returning to Malaysia, Pn. Rohaida started to wear a veil. As this was deemed a deviant social behavior by the public, her parents strongly objected to her veiling. However, these pressures had not altered the positive attitude of Pn. Rohaida to participate in the Islamic revival movement.

At that time, my mother disagreed with me. She didn't like it. She didn't allow me to join Darul Arqam...She thought the Islamic teachings from Ustaz Ashaari deviated from the norms. Islam...had been previously influenced by adat [Malay customary law], so people were confused. What we learn from Darul Arqam is the true Islam...so it looks different from adat. But, at that time, people didn't understand, they thought that it deviated from the norms.

(Pn. Rohaida)

Pn. Rohaida criticized other Muslims who professed to Islam but failed to live up to it. In her opinion, these Muslims were merely biased against Darul Arqam, thus she refused to accept their views and perspectives. On the contrary, she was confident that she was actually following the real Islamic pathway, compared to others. She engaged in Darul Arqam and acted consistently in her readiness towards an Islamic way of life. Pn. Rohaida's real experience reflected that being Islamized had given her a sense of security rather than causing disorder in her life.

At that time covering the head [veiling] was not a common practice. In a religion class...the teacher told us...as a Muslim woman, we must tutup aurat [veiling to protect modesty]. Yes...I had this knowledge...but it was just for the sake of learning...nobody practiced veiling in daily life. When Darul Arqam began to promulgate Islamic teaching in Kuala Lumpur...dakwah began...Muslims in Malaysia started to understand about

tutup aurat. That time...I was thinking people who attended religion class with me...they didn't practice veiling at all, even my own mother rejected this...what was the problem? tutup aurat is stated in Al-Quran...but why these people could be so hypocritical? My mother was strongly against my veiling. My own mother used to complain: 'Darul Arqam! Deviate...deviate!' She scolded me, asking why I veiled, since others didn't. But I continued based on my own desire...my kesedaran [self-consciousness]. Islam is a way of life. So at that time I persisted in my decision. I didn't want to be a hypocrite; I wanted kebenaran agama [religious truth]. So I put effort into improving my Islamic knowledge...about Darul Arqam...about Islam...

(Pn. Rohaida)

2. Polygamous Marriage

Polygamous marriage is also a sign of Islamic piety. In recent years, the debate of polygamy practice is becoming increasingly complex. It generates widely diverse perspectives: opponents of polygamy depict Muslim women lacking social support and suffering ill-treatment in polygamous marriage (Nurmila 2007). On the other hand, for proponents of polygamy, the practice of polygamy is regarded as essential for solving persistent social problems such as extra-marital dalliances and the surplus unmarried women in the society (Maulana Wahiduddin Khan 1995).

The majority of the Muslims in Malaysia today are dissuaded from the practice of polygamy. Muslim women in polygamous marriages are notably characterized as ignorant and muddled. Hence, Muslim women who decide to enter polygamous marriages have to be prepared to endure the bad consequences. Muslim women in polygamous marriage are biased against by the public and also need to confront similar pressures at home. This is because Muslim parents are against their children entering polygamous marriages.

Each one of us should be able to come on our own view on the issue of polygamy. What is essential is how do the women in a polygamous marriage experience it? Is the decision to enter a polygamous marriage a bad idea and a disruption to their lives?

The practice of polygamy is allowed in Islam. Being a pious Muslim woman, some thus choose this as a right way of life. The advantages of polygamous marriage have been made acceptable. This is because for a pious Muslim, the importance of pursuing Islam piety outweighs everything else in their life. We should understand that the acceptance of Muslim women to enter polygamous marriages is not a result of false consciousness or through brainwashing.

In this research, the OWC elite Muslim women's choice of polygamous marriage shows that they were, in fact, able to comprehend the risks and impacts of polygamous marriage, and were ready to take up the responsibilities for the choice they made. In similar terms to Fromm (1942), they are independently giving meaning to their claim; no one interferes with the expression of their thoughts. Their decisions are not rooted in convention, laws or norms, but arise from fundamental human experiences. The OWC elite Muslim women had weighed the gains of pursuing an Islamic way of life against the losses they had to face.

The most important issue is that the OWC elite Muslim women did not take 'action for action's sake'. Freire (2002) stated that this kind of action will hinder one's reflections, negate the true praxis and make dialogue impossible. On the contrary, the OWC Muslim women's courage demonstrated in pursuit of Islamic piety implied their ability to cope with every obstacle and predicament. Furthermore, in response to the parental objections, dialogues based on 'humility and love' were conducted (Freire 2002). They exerted strenuous efforts to represent the positive presence of Islam, and also to demonstrate how Islamic piety helped to create a blissful and harmonious life for them.

Pn. Laila described how she underwent a period of difficulties when deciding to become involved in the Islamic revival movement. Pn. Laila is a fulltime committee member of Darul Arqam. She is 44 years old. Previously, she was a temporary teacher. She had become an assistant to the Malaysian government's political elite. After getting married, she chose to fully join in Darul Arqam. Now, she is responsible for Darul Arqam's business premises at Sembilan, Melaka and Egypt. She is wife number three. She has three co-wives in her family. As mentioned earlier, her co-wives, Pn. Sharifah and Pn. Aminah are also my interviewees. Their husband is the third son of Ustaz Ashaari, the former leader of Darul Arqam.

During the *dakwah* period, UMNO and Darul Arqam represented two Islamic concepts respectively. The UMNO, a ruling political party, was always in contest with Darul Arqam to expand its influence with the public. In the ensuing years, the rise of the Islamic revival movement inspired both UMNO and Darul Arqam to become further Islamized, and it sharpened the degree of conflict between both sides. Pn. Laila's mother, who was a member in UMNO, thus felt antagonistic towards Darul Arqam. She was very angry when she learned that Pn. Laila had chosen to join Darul Arqam. Pn. Laila told me:

I joined Darul Arqam when I studied in the University. I liked to get involved in Darul Arqam's activities...reading Darul Arqam's books...magazines. My mother was strongly against me joining Darul Arqam! She used to scold me: 'shame'! She got angry when she read about Darul Arqam's news. She was a member of the UMNO...different from us!

(Pn. Laila)

At that time, polygamous marriage was a rare form of marriage in Malay society. Pn. Laila's decision to enter a polygamous marriage further encountered strong objections from her mother. Her mother was worried that she would be neglected by the husband in this kind of marriage.

Freire (2002) mentioned that false consciousness occurs due to lack of knowledge towards the nature of social events. In here, Pn. Laila's response conversely reflected that she actually had the knowledge to identify the problems and take necessary action to resolve conflicts which occurred between herself and her mother. She convinced her mother with the fact that her life in piety was full of happiness, calm and peaceful. For her, the facts told the story.

She was so angry when I entered a polygamous marriage. But I just continue doing what is right [adhere to Islamic teaching]! At the same time, I showed her...I have a blissful marriage...my home is in harmony. Sometimes, she slept over at my house. She saw that four of us [co-wives] can really mix together. I think it is normal for the parents to worry about their children. At that time, she was afraid that I would be neglected by my husband...quarrel with my co-wives. But I showed her my real life...our

Islamic models. Our leader Ustaz Ashaari has created the Islamic models...the ideal model of Muslim family...the culture model...education...so when she realized that these models are really useful...can help to solve my daily matters...can rescue me [ascend to heaven], so no problem. My mother finally accepted me.

(Pn. Laila)

Aside from the above, we shall look into Pn. Abdullah's Story. Pn. Abdullah is 42 years old and works as a pharmacist. She is the third wife and she has two co-wives in her family. Pn. Abdullah faced obstacles when she got involved in Islamic piety, especially at the time she decided to enter a polygamous marriage. She was born in Johor, where polygamy was not common. The Johor Malay society had a great bias in its perceptions against polygamy. Pn. Abdullah's father was an Imam (prayer leader), and was supposed to accept polygamous practice. However, through Pn. Abdullah's narratives, the practice of polygamy was still incongruent with their family's existing values and beliefs.

My parents objected to me becoming involved in a polygamous marriage. Nowadays, many people are not familiar with polygamy. Even Muslims in general also do not understand polygamy. I come from Johor...people in Johor...my parents...they are not familiar with the polygamous lifestyle...so they think that polygamy is a deviant teaching...so they objected!

(Pn. Abdullah)

Pn. Abdullah's decision to enter a polygamous marriage was driven by a sense of self-determination. In her narratives, polygamy was not an affront to the values of Islam; it was acknowledged as the right way of life. As Rathner (2013) mentions, ignorance about one's own motives for action means they are neither one's own nor rational. Pn. Abdullah states that her own identity as a co-wife implies that she actually understood the consequences of her decision. She was aware of the negative impacts of polygamy as assumed by the public:

...to be the third wife in our family...I am okay. But it takes time too...of course I know what I did. I know it cannot be changed anymore...once I decided to enter a polygamous marriage. I mean if there are troubles, if I don't get a blissful marriage...But I won't step back...I won't blame others.

This is my own decision. I don't care about what other people say. Polygamy is the teaching of Al-Quran, the Prophet practiced polygamy as well. So I will continue without the slightest hesitation. People from outside [non-members of the OWC]... they live a monogamous lifestyle, but their family is broken too... Meanwhile, I also show to my parents...I am happy in my marriage. There is no negligence...I can have my own career. My co-wives' children always come to my house. I get along with my co-wives. My parents do not see any negative impacts on me caused by a polygamous marriage, so day by day, they accept more. Based on my experience...I just need to show them about my real life...don't need to explain much...in the long run, they will understand.

(Pn. Abdullah)

Pn. Abdullah chose to preserve her stance on polygamous marriage based on her belief in Islamic piety. Being a responsible subject, she was able to lead her parents to enter into 'dialogue'—showing them the advantages of adhering to Islamic piety. Pn. Abdullah's parents, who had a chance to understand their daughter's everyday life experiences, eventually changed their negative perceptions towards polygamous marriage.

4-3 Self-affirmation

In this study, when people tend to portray the OWC elite Muslim women as house-bound women who lack autonomy, being oppressed and marginalized by men; the OWC elite Muslim women in fact have shown that they have successfully pursued self-affirmation. Besides cultivating their personal development, they are also aware of, and participate actively in, public affairs, and take up the responsibilities of contributing to the construction of the better society.

In general, the OWC elite Muslim women who prioritize their motherly and wifely roles tend to be regarded as limiting their personal freedom and self-development. Even a career woman can no more escape from this situation. Her professional roles and domestic roles are always in conflict, and difficult to be reconciled. Thus, achieving gender equality and liberating women from domestic roles has become a common goal in modern society (De Beauvoir 1953; Aminah 1997; Irwan and Nor 2011).

However, the Islamic principle conversely shows that the women's honorable positions are their roles as mother and wife. Women are urged to prioritize their domestic roles. Those women who are proficient in domestic matters will deserve honor and obtain security for life in the hereafter (Maulana Wahiduddin Khan 1995; Ummul Humam 2011).

Conflict thus occurs between the advocacies of liberating women versus placing women in the domestic sphere. Nowadays, modern people see the emphasis on Islamic piety as remnants of a 'pre-modern', or even 'backward' lifestyle. However, while modern men fight against what they consider to be destructive customs they are, in fact, overlooking the agency of religious practitioners. This means that a person who chooses a life in piety is not necessary self-denying, self-alienated or 'enclosed in their own hearts' (De Tocqueville, quoted in Taylor 1991:9).

For them, executing wifely and motherly duties never renounces their abilities and interests to participate in public affairs. Domestic roles and self-developments could run parallel to each other. The OWC elite Muslim women's experiences have shown that a life in piety brought different valuable experiences to them. They are not confronted with the problems encountered by the majority of Muslim modern women; conflicts about career and solitude of modern life (Ong 1995). Pn. Faridah stated that she was capable of combining career and marriage successfully.

The Obedient Wives Club doesn't command women to fear their husbands, or order them to sit at home and look after the children only. No! We can go out and gain new knowledge about the world. For example, I have so many friends out there [non-members of OWC]. Sometimes, they ask what work I do in the OWC. I compare my life to theirs...I feel that my life is more enjoyable. I could contribute to the Islamic activities and concerns about the social issues occurring around us. My friends...they can only focus on daily household chores. Taking care of husband and children...seems like very dull and hectic.

(Pn. Faridah)

In the *Obedient Wives Club*, Muslim women learn to open their eyes widely, and become involved in various public affairs and obtain self-affirmation. Lifestyle in the *Obedient Wives Club* leads them to access the full range of their potentials and abilities.

Through this, they obtain satisfaction and achieve long standing excitement. They are not ‘a housewife who is deprived of meaningful goals and could only find satisfaction in her traditional roles as mother and wife’ (Freidan 1983).

I think that OWC members are different [from other women]. As like me... besides taking care of households, I have extra times to travel. I've been to Jordan, Middle East, Indonesia, etc. Even as I need to fulfill the wifely duties, but I could still go travelling. The Obedient Wives Club helps to open my mind...compared to my friends...Every morning they go to work; and then come back from the work at night. Their life is so boring and routine. They lack of motivation to step forward...without any goal of life. They often seek advice from me...In the Obedient Wives Club, we are different. Practicing the Islamic way of life...helps me to fulfill my dream. I am not a woman...staying-at-home...waiting for the husband to come back home. I am a person taking part in reviving the Islamic spirit...creating an Islamic society.

(Pn. Faridah)

According to Townsend (1999:93-95), ‘power with’ is the way to obtain empowerment. A ‘power with’ is an individual who shares a close relationship with others, being together and developing their strength and courage, to set out goals and put plans into practice. The person tends to obtain a sense of participation and opportunity to grow.

The OWC elite Muslim women echoed a similar trajectory. As Muslim pioneers, they stepped into the public sphere, acting as agents of social change. They co-operated fully in order to create a role model for Islamic society. The active involvement in the public sphere disclosed their individual autonomy in getting things done. They found a safe space to express the totality of their own self, connecting themselves with the public.

In the Obedient Wives Club, we learn to take up the roles of Muslim women. We are not a person...just know to serve our husband at home. We are women who work together with men, reviving the Islamic way of life...we educate the public. Women can be leaders too. In the Obedient Wives Club, we become ibu-ibu [female leader]. While playing our roles as wife and mother, we are also working in our business premises...

(Pn. Zakiah)

...We set up the Obedient Wives Club. It becomes a model to the public...we can discuss together...provide solution to the problem...we will try to work together, figure out what is the problem [in family scope]. Husband and wife...what cause them to quarrel with each other? Is it because of the economic factor...or because of the children? We try to find out and solve the problems together. It doesn't mean that in the Obedient Wives Club we don't have any family problem. But we live as a group, we could solve it together...we could solve it in an easier and faster way.

(Pn. Sharifah)

We run Islamic projects. For example, we work together to set up an orphanage...work together to raise sufficient funds...we work together...co-operate with each other...from there, we develop ourselves, as well as helping others out. As I said before, we could contribute to society. It is not for our own benefit only. You see...in the Islamic way of life, it is more meaningful...I can focus on my job, my field in the Obedient Wives Club. We work together...to revive the Islamic spirit.

(Pn. Aminah)

The sense of togetherness further endowed the OWC Muslim women with an inner feeling of personal responsibility and strong mission towards society. They gather together and contribute to the creation of a moral society. Besides improving their own life, they also emphasize the improvement of the whole of society. They are not seeing themselves as alone, escaping from the world. They refused to be labeled as 'pitiable comforts', people who lack passion and aspiration in life (Taylor 1991).

They are aware of the social issues occurring in every nook and cranny of public society. They co-operate with the authority concerned to redress the moral decay that occurs in society. Through Pn. Sharifah's explanation, they are Muslim women who actively hold campaigns, foster moral values to educate the youth in ethical and rational manners. From this, we could see that they are a group of Muslim pioneers, having great power to run things, make changes and influence the society.

In the Obedient Wives Club, we are working together to counter the public smoking problem. There are adolescents addicted to smoking, drug abuse...so we help to resolve this problem. Even as we start to work in the small scope, but we gain experience from it...we get training from it...so that we could help do it better later on. The government trusts us...we cooperate with government departments...set up expos [exposition, a large-scale public exhibition] and road shows in the name of Islam...Besides, we provide alternatives to children. We set up a broadcast systems...there are all halal [lawful, good and permissible] programs such as music programs...songs...and also programs about culture...we also produce halal products for the Muslim community...we oppose extramarital sexual activity...so we promote Seks Suci Islam [Islamic pure sex]...what we have said, we put it in practice...we educate the society...

(Pn. Sharifah)

We set up an orphanage...we also teach children [to know] the existence of God. We put emphasis on love and caring...put emphasis on ibadah [religious duties]. We help them to adhere to God's will. So, when they become pious Muslims, they won't be involved in bad things [commit crimes]. Even though they are poor, they won't become robbers...if they were rich, they thus will contribute to society...help other people. You see, nowadays, so many people who are highly educated and obtain wealth in life, but they are still using their knowledge to manipulate other people...Because they don't have a feeling of God!

(Pn. Rohaida)

While the majority of people are indulging in the freedom of modern life, they in fact have lost the ability to realize that they have become powerless, isolated and an instrument of purpose from outside of themselves (Fromm 1942). The OWC elite Muslim women in this study, conversely, have demonstrated their ability to engage in self-reflexivity toward the western notion of secularization and modernity.

We don't say we reject all the western values...no! We just don't want the bad influences. Not to say that we isolate ourselves...we also connect with

the society...but we should be choosy to what we take...For them [non-members of OWC]...they relate everything to freedom and rights...but we don't think that way. There are negative impacts of excessive freedom...so why do we take it? We should curb it. So our idea is that excessive freedom is not good for the stability of a society...we must learn to evaluate the situation...

(Pn. Azizah)

The OWC elite Muslim women's own involvement in reality, within the historical situation, led them to criticize the situation and wish to change it. This process reflected their 'conscientization' of becoming an 'independent individual' (Freire 2002:67). What we can see is that there was growth and expansion of themselves. They are similar to the kind of people described by Fromm (1942), obtaining full realization of their potentialities, living actively and spontaneously. Meanwhile, they also act as the agents of change and seek to fulfill this role by serving as role models in their communities. They become catalysts for the development of Muslim society. They exert enormous efforts to promote love and care throughout Muslim society.

We are working toward building amore loving society, living peacefully, helping each other regardless of races...we love and protect our country...but this must start from the family. Husband and wife must educate their children...because children are the hope of our future...they will contribute to the country in the future...so if they lack their parents' love and education, they will follow bad examples...commit crimes like drug abuse, robbery, fraud...At that time, our society will become chaotic...

(Pn. Abdullah)

The society that...everybody submits to God. You see...the social malaises in present day...all are caused by people...they leave God aside...the marital breakdown, social ills...so we have to adhere to God...we urge to return to the society that is giving emphasis to family values...creating an ideal family in which the husband and women play their roles respectively...submit to God.

(Pn. Rohaida)

In sum, the OWC elite Muslim women's stories enable us to see more clearly the nuances, details, and complexities of the Muslim women's lives. While Muslim women are regarded as a powerless group, the OWC elite Muslim women who, being Islamized, have shown conversely how they play their role in Islamic society.

The OWC Muslim women actively pursue an Islamic way of life. By embracing critical consciousness thinking, they exercise their autonomy and take up responsibility to determine on their own life choices. They become involved in the Islamic revival movement, searching for self-affirmation and self-development. They have realized their own individual self, to have faith in their life. The OWC elite Muslim women's stories reflect that they have entered into the humanization process and become independent people. As Fromm (1942) stated, individuals whose thoughts, feelings, and actions are the expression of their selves and not of an automaton.

The moments of one's own spontaneity at the same time are moments of one's genuine happiness (Fromm 1942:224). The stories of elite Muslim women have shown a similar pattern. Despite there being difficulties and hard times in their life, the OWC elite Muslim women are able to cope with them by adhering to Islamic values and concepts. They are content with the choice to step into the Islamic way of life. Though this path is filled with continuous obstacles, however, their persistence has brought about passions and directions in their life, simultaneously creating a better life for themselves.

CHAPTER 5: Equal before God

According to Islamic principles, men and women have allotted roles. Basically, the husband plays the lead role in the household. As the maintainer, he is obliged to fulfill his wife's and offspring's basic needs, such as food, clothing and housing. He also acts as mentor to educate his wife and children in religious matters; in return, the Muslim woman performs her wifely duties, bears children and obeys her husband. As wife she owes the husband obedience, she is to devotedly serve her husband in all matters, including her husband's sexual access to her (Patricia 1997:31).

Quoting the above Islamic teaching, the OWC elite Muslim women thus emphasize the wife's submission to the husband. They agree with the husband's free sexual access to the wife, allowing husband to beat a recalcitrant wife and publishing reading materials to educate women on serving the husband's sexual desires. However, this ethos has stirred up considerable controversy. Their acts have been regarded by the public as feeding into the notion of female inferiority, and promoting patriarchal domination over the rights and lives of Muslim women.

Are they an oppressed group which has internalized patriarchal values and norms? To gain a deeper understanding, this study investigates the socio-cultural context of the OWC elite Muslim women. Through their personal narratives and accounts, this chapter explores the meaning that OWC elite Muslim women attach to the concept of 'Equal before God'. Under this concept, it shows that though OWC elite Muslim women could not rewrite the Islamic rules that structured their lives, they actually have the capability to negotiate those embedded power structures in the Islamic gender moral order, preserving their marital power, rights, meaning and dignity in everyday life.

Within the concept of 'Equal before God', the alternative gender moral order highlights that the status of women and men are not hierarchically arranged according to sex. Instead, women and men are equal before God. It is different from the mainstream study's findings which illuminate Muslim women as being less significant than men, men are superior to women and a man's work is rendered more valuable than women's work in social systems (Amina 1995:37).

The concept of 'Equal before God' conveys an important message, wherein Muslim men and women have different roles under the eyes of God. However, they are all granted an equal status and are supposed to fulfill God's will (Maulana Wahiduddin Khan 1995; Sylva 2009). Self-responsibility is highlighted here. What a person does, whether sin or good deed, is entirely his or her own affair. In other words, Muslim men and women keep their status as single individuals; each person is responsible for his or her own salvation. By means of this, a pious Muslim woman will not be degraded even though her husband commits a sin. She is only accountable to God for her own actions. If a woman fulfills all religious duties and obligations in accordance with Islamic teaching, she could then obtain higher status than her husband who commits a sin.

Similar to Muslim men, the OWC elite Muslim women are able to utilize their rights to choose and decide. In reality, they undergo self-reflection to examine the impact of personal values, beliefs and experiences. By placing God in a prior position, the OWC elite Muslim women, and Muslim men, are 'Equal before God'. The OWC elite Muslim women are able to discern between 'sin' and 'deed', and have the right to refuse any of their husband's commands which transgress God's will. For instance, an untrustworthy husband is sinful in the eyes of God; and a wife could refuse to obey an untrustworthy husband.

In an Islamic marital relationship, the husband is the leader of a household unit while the wife is an assistant. However, the concept of 'Equal before God' requires that a Muslim woman's wifely role is as significant as a Muslim man's leader role in a household before God. In responding to the interviews, the OWC elite Muslim women emphasized that they are not inferior to their husbands, they gain pride and honor by fulfilling their roles as wife and mother. It is a solid relationship between husband and wife instead of a domination-submission one.

Equality does not mean that all men are alike (Fromm 1942:228). One's soul is not degraded although they hold different positions and roles in society (Alain 2005:53). In the concept of 'Equal before God', the OWC elite Muslim women rely on themselves to make responsible decisions. The OWC elite Muslim women's obedience and obeisance do not mean that they have no ability to voice their opinions or negotiate their agency and rights in daily life.

To probe deeper into the concept of ‘Equal before God’, we should look into the OWC elite Muslim women’s responses to the issue of the wife’s submission to their husband, wife-beating and sexuality in marriage. These provide novel insights which audaciously subvert the public assumption that the OWC elite Muslim women are the ultimate victims of a patriarchal religion.

5-1 Muslim Men and Muslim Women: Different but Equal

As we know, in a modern society, family, love and marriage tend to be based on ‘pure relationship’—a social relationship which is internally referential, namely, one that depends fundamentally on satisfaction or rewards generic to that relation itself. In a ‘pure relationship’, a couple should have equal power, appreciate each other’s unique qualities and sustain trust through mutual disclosure (Giddens 1992).

On the contrary, the gender moral order advocated by the Obedient Wives Club allows men and women to play different roles. For them, the precepts of Islam for men and women are based on their respective, natural constitutions. They are different in their physiological structures. Thus men and women should be allocated different roles in accordance with their biological differences. While the husband becomes the leader in the household, it is thus necessary for his wife to obey him in all aspects of life.

In the Obedient Wives Club, the husband should be a leader in the household, while the wife is an assistant, helps her husband. This rule is set by God...set by Al-Quran. If there are women’s organizations that strike of the same [role] between...men...women...we can’t agree. It is because according to Islam, the husband needs to become a leader...he is the person to lead his wife...In Islam, we believe that a man has nine akal [rationality, intelligence, self-control] and one nafsu [animality, lust, desire] while woman has nine nafsu and one akal...this is Islam...so the husband should lead his wife...

(Pn. Zainah)

However, we should not overlook that the gender moral order promoted by the Obedient Wives Club also reflects the important meaning—men and women, both are ‘Equal before God’. The OWC elite Muslim women believe that the partaker of ‘the divine nature’ would lead someone to have higher status. As long as the OWC elite Muslim

women fulfill their roles, they could equally receive rewards from God. In short, this gender moral order is striving for a life where all actions and thoughts are oriented toward the fulfillment of God's will. And only by fulfilling God's will, are they endowed with a sense of happiness and security in their lives in this world and the hereafter.

Pn. Sharifah further explained the distinctive roles of Muslim women and Muslim men under the eyes of God. She pointed out that the blind aping of the western gender moral order would lead to disorder in terms of marital relationship. Pn. Sharifah is 47 years old. She is an Indonesian. She learned about Darul Arqam during her university life in Indonesia. At that time she had great passion to join Darul Arqam, hence, she decided to abandon her studies at university in order to become fully involved in Darul Arqam. She immigrated to Malaysia after getting married to the third son of Ustaz Ashaari, the former leader of Darul Arqam. Now, she is in charge of the Global Ikhwan's business premises in Singapore and Jordan. Pn. Sharifah is wife number three in a four wives polygamous family in Rawang community.

In fact, in front of God...for Muslims, Islam has stated that all of us are slave-servants of God. Men and women are equal. Muslims who are bertakwa [conscious of God's presence, perform the righteous deeds and avoid committing sin], mean they believe in God, feel confident in God...perform good deeds...The only difference between men and women....if a woman...she believes in God, she performs good deeds...compared with a man who commits sin and doesn't adhere to God, thus we will say that this woman is better than that man. In other words, regardless of sex, men and women must adhere to the Islamic principles in order to obtain higher status. Nowadays, the West organizes...propagates a contestation...women compete with men, [striving for] freedom...there are organizations... institutions...struggling for women's rights...I don't think it is the best solution; in fact, it brings about damage.

(Pn. Sharifah)

The gender moral order which depicts Muslim men and women as intrinsically different in term of akal/nafsu has been regarded as promoting gender inequality in the eyes of 'modern people'. Nevertheless, the OWC elite Muslim women refute that they

actually promote the ‘complementary relationship’ in the family realm. The spouses are required to co-operate with each other, as a pilot and a co-pilot, working together and charting the course of their destination.

However, in the workplace, Muslim women could compete actively with others so as to attain higher achievements. Muslim women deserve to get higher positions in the workplace if they acquire better skills, abilities and qualifications. In fact, the OWC elite Muslim women are able to pursue their own careers; simultaneously, they also fulfill the wifely and motherly responsibilities indicated in Islamic teaching.

...God creates us differently...men are able to do hard work...tough work, but women cannot...to them [non-members of the Obedient Wives club]...if we are saying that women hold higher positions in the working place...fine...if you can do the job, it's alright. In GISB, we all are career women. But there are certain things...we are made differently...if talking about gender equality, fine...in terms of....at the office, if women are more experienced than men...then they can be leaders! But we are talking about the OWC...about the family...in the family unit, husband and wife, they respect each other...but the husband, he is still a leader...

(Pn. Azizah)

...No...we don't think it is gender inequality...in our organization, the Obedient Wives Club, we women also can become leaders. We lead among women...and the children are under our guidance...a woman could have her own career. In the working place, she can be a managing director, but it doesn't mean that we should order our husband [at home]...the outsiders [non-members of the Obedient Wives Club] tend to say that if the wife works as board director, she thus has more authority at home...she could order her husband...order him to look after their children, to change the baby's diaper! We shouldn't order our husbands like we are the boss...but we could ask him nicely...this is okay...nothing wrong...we help each other. You must understand that letting the husband be a leader doesn't mean that he wouldn't help us anymore...no! If he is pious Muslim, he will understand

that he should help his wife...so, under this co-operative relationship, we manage to create a harmonious family.

(Pn. Zainah)

Esteem is the honor an individual gains by being judged by a standard (Appiah 2010). Despite Muslim women having to take on the roles of mother and wife, they actually gain a strong sense of esteem and respect from Muslim society (Maulana Wahiduddin Khan 1995). This is because Islam shows full respect to the Muslim women who are good mothers and wives. In this study, the OWC elite Muslim women believed that the roles of mother and wife could help maintain family stability. The OWC elite Muslim women value the works they do, set great value by their roles, and demonstrate their equality with men. Being a good mother and wife, the OWC elite Muslim women have attained the prestigious status of being equal to the status of pious Muslim men. It was not as public opinion said that they were subservient therefore dependent...therefore oppressed.

Just look around, women become mothers... the country's presidents...all around the world, who was not given birth by a woman? You see, the mother is very important. Women become mothers...and also wives...they have a role as a husband's friend, listen to a husband's problem... discuss family matters, social issues...

(Pn. Sharifah)

You think that we are men's slaves? No...we are following the teaching of the Prophet and God. To have a harmonious family, it must first have a good wife. A good wife is very important, she could assist the husband...work together to create a harmonious family. But we have to make sure that we follow the Prophet and God's guidelines...

(Pn. Rohaida)

The wife who fulfills her responsibilities will inspire her husband toward the same direction [following Islamic teaching]. The husband thus fulfills his roles as a good husband and father...he is responsible to his wives and children...contributes to society. So if the husband has a good wife, who

will help him become a good man. The wife's role could assure the success of the husband's roles.

(Pn. Abdullah)

In the concept of 'Equal before God', 'wife submission' is equal to their submission to God. God should be prioritized in the first place. Muslim women's submission must align with Islamic teaching. They should know to discern between 'sin' and 'deed'. If a husband does something sinful, his wife should not obey him. The husband should play his Muslim roles, follow the central teaching of Islam, and fulfill God's will. In other words, God places equal duties on men and women. Both men and women need to play their roles respectively. By fulfilling God's will, Muslim men are granted obedient wives while Muslim women could ascend to heaven.

Obey the husband? The scope is wide...it includes prayer, tutup aurat [veiling to protect modesty]...obeying the husband doesn't mean fulfilling his sexual desires only, actually those things [all above]... included. It is useless for us to obey the husband, if we do not veil...if we do not pray. It is meaningless...Obeying God is the most important thing!

(Pn. Zakiah)

As long as the husband obeys God...obeys the prophets, thus we have to obey him. If otherwise, we don't need to obey to the husband. We have to reject any unreasonable order from the husband.

(Pn. Sharifah)

In Islam, God is in the first place, the second place...would be the Prophet, and then thirdly is our leader. God says we should obey our husband as long as what is being ordered by our husband doesn't contradict God's will. If otherwise, we cannot obey! We have the right to object, but we have to solve it in a proper way...avoid hard feelings... for instance, we can't shout at the husband: 'this is my right, whether I want to do it or not, you don't have the right to stop me!' ...No...God says...Islam must be full of love.

(Pn. Rohaida)

The 'wife submission' will only be conducted through certain 'terms and conditions'. We should make clear that Muslim wives' submission to their husbands does not necessarily mean that they are blindly dominated by men. It is different from Widyaningrum's (2005) theory which stated that the gender roles of women inevitably set them up as passive people.

In fact, the OWC Muslim women are capable of evaluating, judging and making decisions by making use of their Islamic knowledge. They play an active role to augment their Islamic knowledge. It is analogous to the Muslim women who are involved in theology, and in interpreting the Al-Quran (Noriani 2003; Sylva 2009). Autonomy and agency are found with the OWC elite Muslim women.

Al-Quran mentioned that we should obey our husband. Unless he does not obey God, in that case we don't need to obey him. We have a solution for women...if the husband transgresses Islamic teaching, does not perform prayer...we have a solution for women. Husband and wife can discuss together...the wife could advise her husband...or we can seek help from an arbiter, we must understand what is the husband's problem? We have to find out the problem first...it doesn't mean that we need to obey blindly. If the husband goes against the Islamic rules, so we don't need to obey him. You see...it is very important for the husband to understand about Islam, to adhere strictly to God's will. The husband is a leader, if he can't fulfill his obligations, how could he convince the wife to obey him?

(Pn. Faridah)

[It is] only in the situation where husband and wife together adhere to God. It is important, God orders us to do so, we must adhere to God's will, or else, everything will be disordered. Obedient...It helps me to get closer with God [to accomplish a secure life]. But if the husband deliberately transgresses Islam, jahiliyyah [ignorance of divine guidance]...takes advantage [from the wife submission]... then we don't need to obey him.

(Pn. Abdullah)

Pn. Hajah claimed that by following Islamic principles, she managed to preserve her own rights and voice her concerns to her husband. She is 48 years old. Previously, she

was a teacher in secondary school. She requested an early retirement so as to work fulltime in Global Ikhwan. Now, she is a female unit manager, managing female staff in Global Ikhwan's business premises, located at Kuala Lumpur. She is a first wife and she has one co-wife living in Thailand. She told me that:

We are taught to obey our husband. But we evaluate the situation. If he [husband] asks us to do something bad, I won't obey. But if his order doesn't contravene the syariat [Islamic legal code], I have to obey! For example, if the husband doesn't allow us to pray, we don't need to obey. Because his order has transgressed God's will. We place God first...the Prophet... if the husband's order contradicts God's will, we don't need to obey... [It] doesn't mean that we obey blindly! It needs to depend on the situation. As Muslim women, [we] must veil, if the husband doesn't allow this, we shouldn't obey the husband anymore. It is sin [it is in contradiction to God's will]...we stand on our own rights.

(Pn. Hajah)

Women's obedience is an Islamic teaching from God. They are supposed to fulfill God's will in order to obtain security of life in the current world and the hereafter. Muslim women's choice to obey the husband reflects that they are people with a conscience, and embody the desire to submit to God's will. In fact, their submission to the husband equates to the submission to God.

We obey because God orders us to do so. It is not because of my husband, I do not fear my husband. I fear God. So I follow God's will. I am willing to serve my husband, I volunteer...no forcing! This is my good deed. I want to have more good deeds...

(Pn. Hasanah)

You have to understand...as a wife...I don't fear my husband. I just follow the Islamic teaching. God wants us to respect the husband, obey the husband...so I follow...it is God's will.

(Pn. Sharifah)

Pn. Azizah further showed her willingness to obey her husband. According to her, fulfilling the husband's needs led her closer to God and obtaining happiness and calmness in her daily life. Pn. Azizah is 49 years old and a professional dentist. She comes from a well educated family. Her sister is a chartered accountant, her brother is an analytical engineer, and her eldest brother works as cardiologist. She joined Darul Arqam in 2000 when Darul Arqam re-registered the new entity named Rufaqa.

For me...I obey my husband...it is because of God. Thanks God! My family is happy. This is my own choice. I love God...I follow God's teaching, so I obey my husband. It is not because that I fear my husband. No! Although we are both working, we feel tired after getting off work...yes...tired. But I still take care of my husband, no matter how tired I am. I am willing to serve him...because I want God to be happy! I volunteer myself...nobody forces me! Why do people say this is oppression? Why? In fact, I am happy to do this, I do not complain at all.

(Pn. Azizah)

According to the above statements, the OWC elite Muslim women believe that sacrifice brings forth blessings. It was their individual choice to play proactive roles in maintaining family harmony and cohesion. The OWC elite Muslim women's submission to the husband entailed their adherences to Islamic principles. Acting as pious Muslim women, they thus believe that there will be a reward from God, according to the deeds they have done. Rather than being women who fear men's authority, the OWC elite Muslim women's narration shows that they actually experience pleasure and joy from caring for their families.

5-2 What is Wife-beating really about?

Wife-beating occurs often in Malaysian Muslim society. It is a social problem affecting the well-being, physical security and health of women (Sisters in Islam:1991). By following Islamic teaching, the Obedient Wives Club acknowledges that the Islamic husband does have the right to beat his wife. This has caused a considerable controversy in

society. The wife-beating right of the husband is regarded as a source of domestic violence.⁴⁵

However, what is wife-beating really about? The OWC elite Muslim women say that the wife-beating verse from Al-Quran was only to raise the Muslim women's awareness of their Muslim identity. It served as a deterrent to stop women transgressing Islamic teaching. In addition, wife-beating must be only conducted for an educational purpose. The husband has responsibility to alert his wife who has committed a fault. Injury was completely prohibited. For them, the wife-beating was actually distinct from the severe violence of men against women.

The wife-beating...is to educate his wife, it is not because of anger, or taking revenge...the purpose is to alert his wife that she did something wrong [commits a sin]...these are not domestic violence cases in which the husband simply beats his wife, injures his wife without solving any problem. In that case, those violence lost the purpose of education...it causes a marital breakdown.

(Pn. Aminah)

No! The husband is not allowed to beat [the wife] due to nafsu [lust or desire]...it is different from the public assumption...in which the victim has to seek help from the police. The wife-beating shouldn't cause any injury! According to Islamic principles, we are taught to act patiently...We are not like the public saying: 'the Obedient Wives Club teaches husbands to beat their wives'. No...the husband should educate his wife nicely, there is no abuse...it is [wife-beating] the last option, why people [non-members of the Obedient Wives Club] highlight this?

(Pn. Hasanah)

...the Obedient Wives Club doesn't encourage...we don't encourage wife-beating...it is only in the critical situation...in which the wife is too

⁴⁵ According to Surah an-Nisa' verse 4:34 '...Righteous women are those who are obedient [to Allah and their husband] and guard their [chastity and whatever is put under their trust] in the absence of their husbands because Allah has guarded them. As from those of you who fear disobedience [nushuz], admonish them and [if they remain disobedient] send them to bed apart, and [if they still remain disobedient], beat them [lightly with the purpose of admonition]'.

excessive, recalcitrant...but we have limitations...[the husband] can't injure his wife! The wife-beating is a lesson... the husband gives his wife a lesson, educates her, gives her a little pain...but cannot injure her...it is not violence...it is the last option...the Obedient Wives Club doesn't encourage this...

(Pn. Zation)

In reality, the OWC elite Muslim women do not agree with an abusive husband. They firmly state their rights in the Islamic principle that enable them to ask for divorce and seek legal aid. There are a large number of Muslim women who fear divorce. It is because they depend on the husband to retain their social status and economic security (Patricia 1997; Nurmila 2007). However, the OWC elite Muslim women's responses to abusive husbands have shown that they have independently obtained the agency to assess their divorce rights. In addition, by adhering to Islamic teaching, the OWC elite Muslim women also pointed out that a husband should play the role of educating his wife. The husband who did not educate his wife had to bear the full consequences of the sin committed by his wife.

The wife has learned Islamic knowledge...so she won't make any problems. If the wife is good, there is no way the husband will beat her, right? The husband is responsible for educating his wife, his children and also his family...The husband must protect his family from suffering hell fire [entering hell]. He has to treat his wife in a better way. He cannot beat his wife simply because of anger...he is sinful!

(Pn. Laila)

[She] can...in that situation [abused by husband], the wife could bring the matter to court. This is a legal procedure...or...according to Islam, we could ask for divorce. If we don't know the procedures, we could seek help from an arbiter...It doesn't mean that we [as a woman] don't have rights! A husband cannot simply beat his wife. There are steps and [the wife-beating] is only allowed in certain situations...for instance, if the wife went out with another man [got caught having an affair] ...that is a sin...if the husband

still doesn't educate his wife, so it is a sin for the husband...why he doesn't take action? He is responsible for educating his wife!

(Pn. Abdullah)

It doesn't happen...in our group, the husbands won't beat their wives. The husbands are pious Muslims, they won't do this...If they don't follow Islam principles, we cannot...we don't need to obey him! If they are too excessive, we have our rights to complain and we can apply for a divorce. We have rights! We must evaluate how has that person behaved? Does the husband adhere to the Islamic teaching [devout believer]...otherwise...why do I need to listen to him!

(Pn. Zakiah)

I...my husband never beat me. We are pious Muslims...we adhere to the Islamic principles, so it [the wife-beating] won't simply happen! The Darul Arqam's men all fear God...they dare not to do this...if the wife does something wrong, her husband will try to advise her patiently...If she is really abused by the husband, she can report to the police. Islam provides us a solution...Islam never requests women to obey blindly. In Islam, you can apply for a divorce. If there is domestic violence...you can seek help from others...

(Pn. Azizah)

To sum up, OWC elite Muslim women are able to discern between 'sin' and 'deed', make wise decisions and protected their own benefits. For them, wife-beating does not exist when both husband and wife are devout believers in God. It is only a deterrent to stop Muslim women transgressing the commandments of Islamic teaching. In addition, they are aware of their ability to assess their divorce rights in the case of being faced with an abusive husband.

5-3 'Sex Slave?'; 'Not at All!'

Lastly, the OWC elite Muslim women providing sex education for Muslim women has been criticized for embracing a religious patriarchal system. Minza (2009) stated that, women who are in a subordinate position tend to be an object to satisfy the sexual needs of

men. In this research, the OWC elite Muslim are assumed by the public to be in a similar situation. They are regarded as Muslim women who fail to obtain equal sexual relationship with their husbands.

Are they really 'sex slaves' for their husbands? In response to this criticism, the OWC elite Muslim women told me that Muslim men and women are: 'Equal before God'. A Muslim wife was not the sex object of the husband. Instead, being pious Muslim women, they were entrusted with the equal right to have enjoyment in a sexual relationship. According to Nasr (1995), 'sex' is sacred in Islamic teaching; it is important for reproduction purposes, and for helping to create and maintain the spiritual intimacy between husband and wife (Ummul Humam 2011). To maintain a harmonious family, they exert enormous effort to maintain an intimate relationship with their husbands.

The interviewee Pn. Zakiah showed similar thoughts. She is 41 years old. Previously, she was an English teacher. After getting married, she and her husband set up an orphanage at Kuala Lumpur. She is now working as a supervisor at Darul Arqam's orphanage. She joined Darul Arqam when she was a university student. Pn. Zakiah is the first wife and she has one co-wife. They are living at the orphanage. She stated that:

In the Obedient Wives Club, we are taught that sex is ibadah [religious duties]. Even when we conduct sexual activity, we must adhere to the ibadah way. Sex is an important teaching in Islam. It is not for fun...it is not a disgusting thing...which we can't...keep quiet [couldn't discuss openly]. Instead, it is ibadah, it is something that we can discuss, learn how to serve our husband. We shouldn't act like the people in former times... afraid to discuss sex. It is a gift from God...

(Pn. Zakiah)

The OWC elite Muslim women explain that sexual activity in marriage was a gift from God. For them, the marital sexual activity called SSI, 'Seks Suci Islam' (Islamic pure sex). It was a halal (lawful, good and permissible) Islamic knowledge that Muslim men and women should learn before getting married. The OWC elite Muslim women agreed that as a legal spouse, husband and wife should discuss this intimate subject. However, they clarified that sexual activity must be only conducted by the legal spouse. Sexual activity outside of marriage was regarded as a sin. It brings family breakdown and social unease.

We could acquire sexual knowledge...only because of the influence of adat [Malay customary law]...Malays feel shy. There is no verse in Al-Quran stating that sex cannot be discussed...no! Actually, we regard it as knowledge...we learn to become a better wife. We believe that our life's activities are all related to Islam. For example, when you eat something, you feel salty...or...delicious...the feelings come from God. So, it is similar with sex...the feelings also come from God. When we are having sex [sexual intercourse] with our husband...every moment...if we are feeling good, we must remember it is because of God. So we learn to appreciate God. We follow the Islamic teaching...so no problem. God makes men and women, he says men and women could have children...so it is not the problem for us to follow God's will. Then...talking about SSI, for us, it means pure, legal... must go through akad nikah [religious marriage ceremony]! For a man to touch a woman [sexual intercourse between man and woman], he should do it in the halal way. After getting married, the man could touch his wife. This is different from illegal sex without a marriage bond. We promote pure, halal...only for legal spouse...If you already have a wife, but still go out and look for a 'first class prostitute', in that case we can't accept it! It is not halal! We promote pure Islamic sex, the couple must first akad nikah...they then can do anything with each other...

(Pn. Azizah)

According to the Islamic principle, we are allowed to receive sex education. Even during the Prophet's times, they also discussed this openly. There was a time, the Prophet performed prayer at mosque, his clothes were stained with semen...the Prophet told his messengers that semen is not considered najis [impure]⁴⁶ ...all sorts of stories from Hadith [Koranic exegesis] ...you see...the Prophet discussed so openly with his messengers...these stories allow that 'Seks Suci Islam' (Islamic pure sex) can actually be discussed openly...

(Pn. Faridah)

⁴⁶ For further understanding, please refer to Shahih al-Bukhari Hadith: Bathing (Ghusl), volume 1, Book 4, and Number 229 http://www.sahih-bukhari.com/Pages/Bukhari_1_05.php

In Islam, this is a knowledge...must be learnt before a woman gets married. The parents must also take responsibility to educate their children. They educate their daughter to be a solehah [righteous] wife...while teaching their son to be a good leader...children need to be educated from an early age...

(Pn. Abdullah)

Widyaningrum (2005) stated that polygamous Muslim wives tend to lack the chance to discover their potential biology. They are not able to use their right to have sex with consent, feeling safe and enjoyable in the sexual relationship. In addition, they are vulnerable and sexually abused by husband.

Though the Obedient Wives Club also practices the polygamous lifestyle, but the OWC elite Muslim women conversely showed that none of the club's members were actually sexual abused by their husbands. They explained that the spouses' sexual activity should work both ways. Though pious Muslim women should serve their husband's sexual desires, the husband should also be considerate about the wife's feelings.

Pn, Hasanah told me her experiences. She is 52 years old. She is a master chef who conducts cooking classes. Besides that, she also holds a secretarial position in the Obedient Wives Club. Pn. Hasanah is the first wife. Previously she had one co-wife. However, her co-wife passed away. She joined Darul Arqam when she was still a senior high school student. She commented that:

We have a guideline...Asian communities are too shy...conservative...In the Obedient Wives Club, we learn to discuss openly...we could discuss, don't need to be shy. Husband and wife could discuss together...for example...the husband could request his wife to wear perfume...or the wife could ask her husband to wear on...we [husband and wife] are spouse...living in the same household...we discuss...give and take...

(Pn. Hasanah)

The Islamic way of life covers every aspect of daily life, including the teaching of the spouse's sexual activity (Ummul Humam 2011). Responding to the wrong assumption of the public, which assumes that the Obedient Wives Club advocates Muslim wives to

serve husbands as ‘first class prostitutes’, the OWC elite Muslim women explained that Islamic pure sex must be conducted with correct attention. Muslims should feel appreciation for God. Muslim elite women explained that spouses should discuss with each other their sexual and emotional needs. Sexual activity could only be conducted through mutual understanding. The sexual life under God’s favor would always help to improve communication between husband and wife, and create a family full of caring and love.

Husband and wife, we should discuss together. This is not a problem. The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs as well. Because we have knowledge about this...we understand about God’s will...so we could discuss together. If the wife has sexual needs, she could ask from the husband.

(Pn. Hajah)

This thing [sexual activity] works in both ways...full with love. It is based on discussion rather than forcing someone...and it is not something that could be scheduled...it is not routine works. It relates to the emotional...feeling and love...it can’t be forced. So if the husband and wife adhere to God, they know their own roles...so there won’t be a problem...

(Pn. Abdullah)

Husband and wife...it is not only the wife who needs to be taught...the husband as well. The husband also must have guidelines...learn sex knowledge... husband and wife must discuss with each other. This is an important chapter. It must be worked in both ways rather than the wife solely serving her husband. The husband and wife are considered halal... after getting married...they discuss together...

(Pn. Zainah)

They [non-members of the Obedient Wives Club] are asking why do we equate [the status of] a wife to a prostitute? No...we don’t say: ‘treat your wife as a prostitute’...we only said: ‘wife should be able to serve the husband gently, nicely’...with that...is it good for you and the husband? We just give an example...When [the public] heard about ‘prostitute’, they jumped already [reprimanded the Obedient Wives Club], they said: ‘why

the Obedient Wives Club asks women to learn to become prostitutes?’ No...we just give an example...we know that the prostitute...she only performs [sexual activity] to get money...but the wife is different! She wants to get love from God. So I don’t mind, I do as much as I can...because I want God to love me. In a marriage, it [sexual activity] works together...it can be discussed. If the wife is obedient...the husband also will love her, want to please her...in both ways. If the wife makes her husband happy, her husband will try to makes her happy too.

(Pn. Azizah)

This chapter demonstrates that under the concept of ‘Equal before God’, Muslim women and men are different but equal. There is no distinction made between male and female for all the most important matters of Islamic faith. Men and women were created as independent individuals. They are responsible and accountable for their own actions in matters of divine reward and punishment. In order to obtain prestigious status, Muslim men and women have to play different roles to fulfill God's will.

In this study, the OWC elite Muslim women do not rely solely on their husbands. Husband is just a companion (Ummu Sofwah 2009). In reality, OWC elite Muslim women keep their status as an independent individual. They are responsible for their own actions towards God. By submitting to God and fulfilling the wifely and motherly roles, the OWC elite Muslim women actually have obtained a higher status in comparison with Muslim men who commit sin.

In addition, with regard to the OWC elite Muslim women’s narratives on the issues of a wife’s submission, wife-beating, as well as their views on sexual activity in marriage, this chapter shows that the OWC elite Muslim women are able to utilize their agency and autonomy to prevent the occurrence of injustices. Their status is as equal as Muslim men. They are involved in the decision making space and aware of external reality. In light of the OWC elite Muslim women’s explanation, it can be seen that they can go against the husband if he is irreligious. They manage to preserve their rights and successfully negotiate with the men’s authority in their daily life.

CHAPTER 6: Ideal Home

After probing the ‘conscientization’ process of the OWC elite Muslim women, and how they preserve their agency and autonomy while negotiating with their husband’s authority, this chapter explains how the OWC elite Muslim women’s participation in the Islamic movement is in the nature of constructing an ‘ideal home’, in which they can obtain both inner and outer support.

Firstly, the ‘Ideal home’ connotes a meaning of ‘inner shelter’, with feelings of refuge and security. Thus the OWC elite Muslim women are endowed with a feeling of trust. It is tantamount to Ernst Bloch’s terms: ‘hope’ or what Tillich depicted as ‘the courage to be’ (quoted in Giddens 1991:38). The OWC elite Muslim women are free from anxiety, fear and bigotry. Nevertheless, in a similar way to others in modern society, the OWC elite Muslim women also encounter an existential crisis. In the ‘liquid modernity’, self-definition and self assertion are difficult to attained (Bauman 2003). However, this ‘ideal home’ manages to offer meanings, purposes and values to the OWC elite Muslim women’s lives in a world that is continuously moving and fluid.

Secondly, the family mode promoted as ‘Ideal home’ helps to resolve the crises of individualism. In the present day, the rise of individualism destroys the traditional notion of family. To maintain an intimate relationship, the individual is expected to sacrifice his or her own interests. The couple embracing of the concept of a ‘pure relationship’ has to struggle between the pursuits of own interests and intimate relationship. In response to this, the OWC elite Muslim women living in the ‘Ideal home’ manage to gain balance between two extremes of modernity. ‘Ideal home’ re-gives meaning to family values. The spouse’s roles in marital sexuality are strengthened. It promotes a complementary and co-operative relationship between husband and wife, binding them to ordered places and roles. The OWC elite Muslim women have gained strengths from the ‘ideal home’; they are capable of achieving self-development without disrupting family harmony. In addition, there is a sense of togetherness that brings close family ties and cohesion.

As the previous chapters have discussed, the OWC elite Muslim women who are highly qualified and have obtained prestigious socioeconomic status have, in fact, received a baptism in modernity’s values and concepts. Hence, to study whether they are

independent subjects, it is necessary to illustrate how the OWC elite Muslim women, by choosing a life in piety, react to modern society.

As we know, coming to the period of high modernity exemplifies the 'disenchantment of the world'. People break away from the bond of religious doctrines and untie traditional bonds. Modern men and women emphasize rational living; the predictable orders in society have disappeared. Profound changes occur in the external social environment of an individual, as well as in the various institutions such as marriage and family.

While modernity is considered to offer the betterment of humanity, we however do not sufficiently recognize conflicts occurring simultaneously. Living in a high modernity period is similar to riding a juggernaut. Changes are unpredictable and beyond human control (Giddens 1991). Extrication of past constraints and obligations cause people to lose the support and security of the close-knit society. Modern men and women nowadays fall into a deep inner isolation. A sense of 'inner homeless' arouses involuntarily from one's heart. The individual, being all alone in the vastness of the cosmos, thus feels meaningless, fearful, insecure and directionless in everyday life (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995:47).

To get rid of the sense of 'inner homelessness', individuals thus pursue 'security'. In modern society, people's lives are submerged by the slogans of Insurance companies. For instance, in Malaysian Muslim society, Muslims are awakened to the vulnerability of life. The Islamic insurance company keeps trumpeting the slogans: 'accident is the worst nightmare for everyone'; 'misfortune happens to you'.⁴⁷ Due to the fear of uncertainty of the future and the risk of unfortunate events, modern men and women thus blindly purchase 'security', require it and pay for it. However, regardless of how frequent they consume 'security', yet they still feel an 'inner homelessness'.

In addition, inherent to modernity notions are the democratization processes in the private sphere. The democratization process heightens the values of gender equality and democracy in love, marriage and family. It aims to attain the concept of 'intimacy as democracy'. According to this concept, 'pure relationship' is emphasized and marriage must be consummate to a democratic order. In an intimate relationship, couples must have

⁴⁷ Please refer to <http://www.takaful-malaysia.com.my/corporate/aboutus/Pages/companybg.aspx> .

equal power, respect for each other's capabilities, views and personal traits (Giddens 1992). However, the 'intimacy as democracy' in reality traps individuals in colliding interests between love, family and personal freedom.

With regard to the statistics from the Malaysia Islamic Development Department (Jakim), Muslim couples get divorced, on average, every 15 minutes in Malaysia. There were 27,116 divorces in 2009, up from 17,749 in 2005. A Jakim spokesman stated that the reason for these divorces were mostly due to irreconcilable differences such as disrespectful attitude towards spouse, selfishness, communication problems, laziness, etc. Muslim divorcees blamed the breakdown of their marriages on the strains of modern life. They customarily criticized their partners: 'too busy with their own life', 'they expect people to do everything for them'.⁴⁸

In a marriage, the modern couple becomes two separate individuals. They calculate their own interests, considerations and advantages. This act is in contradiction to the family and marriage notions in which communal interests are expected to be prioritized. Apparently, there is a change in family behavior. Modern men or women pursue personal freedom, they are no longer willing to sacrifice their own interests so as to maintain a relationship. It is similar to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995:11) explanation: 'freedom plus freedom does not equal love, but more likely means a threat to it or even its end'.

The rise of consumerism also brings tremendous impacts to modern society. For instance, so called 'top pocket' relationships are rampant in society. They are temporary and expendable in nature. At the same time, they also are the very embodiment of instantaneity and disposability. Casual sex such as one-night stands, extramarital sex, and friends with benefits, happen in modern society. This phenomenon causes frailty of the human bond (Bauman2003). Love, marriage and family are no longer strengthened but led to their demise.

Nowadays, we could easily discover that modern men and women are entangled with 'inner homelessness'; the significance of family as a bounded unit has also decreased. These are the predominant maladies of the present day, as described by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995:48). In response to the individual's unbearable conflicts and ambiguity in

⁴⁸Please refer to <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/muslim-divorces-hit-all-time-high-in-malaysia> (The Malaysian Insider 2011/05/27).

modern society, the emergence of the Obedient Wives Club, indeed happens to provide an alternative way for Muslim women to distance themselves from the dilemmas of modernity.

6-1 Killing the ‘Inner Homelessness’

To start this discussion, it is imperative to first explain the framework of Islamic principles that influence the OWC elite Muslim women’s thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. According to Abdul Ala Maududi (1989), the concepts of life in the current world and the hereafter are relative and relational to Islamic context. Muslims believe that all created beings come to life and ultimately die by God’s Decree. Life in the current world is temporary, but permanent in the hereafter. A pious Muslim shall ascend into heaven with a secure place for life in hereafter. On the other hand, hell is an execution ground reserved for sinners. In order to escape from hell, Muslims must work hard to become devout adherents of God.

Fromm (1964:116) said that men living in the current world are aware of themselves, of their past and of their future. Here, the future entails the meaning of the individual’s death day. As human beings, Muslims therefore are also aware of their death at a future day. While Muslims pursue secure lives as others in modern society, they also have to ensure a better life in the hereafter. This uncertainty in the hereafter customarily causes them to feel hapless, helpless and vulnerable:

In Islam, we strongly believe that there is judgment day after death. God will question us...we will get punished for any sin that we have done. People who have done good deeds will be safe and away from hell. God will allow them to ascend into heaven...if they have sinned, there will be a punishment in hell...

(Pn. Zakiah)

There are heaven and hell. You know...I am so afraid to enter hell.

(Pn. Hajah)

In Al-Quran, it is stated that $\frac{3}{4}$ of residents in hell are women...So I need to find my way out of this group!

(Pn. Faridah)

The Islamic doctrines of ‘hell’ and ‘heaven’ bring Muslims to the brink of anxiety. Under certain circumstances, people exposed to alien cultures evoke a feeling of doubt, ambiguity and insecurity. It is because conflict occurs between new and existing values and beliefs. Furthermore, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995:49) mentioned that the lack of close support and trust from another person will cause an individual’s emotional insecurity and mental instability. People living in alien environments customarily face a similar problem. They are overwhelmed by a sense of ‘inner homelessness’.

Pn. Rohaida delineated a similar experience. When she was an adolescent, she won a scholarship from the Malaysian government and was sent to further higher education in the United States. She studied at the University of Arizona, majoring in Economics. Life in the United States always caused ‘inner homelessness’ to her:

You know...when I was far from home...studied in U.S. ...University of Arizona, I felt so empty and meaningless. The moment when I was depressed, I found no one could listen to me. My mother was not beside me...when I was lonely, what to do? Nobody could take care of me.

(Pn. Rohaida)

The lack of an inner sustenance also leads people to fall into deep solitude. They have only empty souls without any focus in life. In this situation, people are often incapable of obtaining a clearly defined purpose. They don’t have the motivational force to act positively and go forward. Pn. Faridah said the following about the feelings of hollowness and vacuity of mind which overwhelmed her during the disbanding of Darul Arqam.

As the previous chapter discussed, Pn. Faridah knew about Darul Arqam when she studied at university. In fact, she had witnessed the crucial transitory state of Darul Arqam. It started from the national ban on Darul Arqam; followed by the shifting of Darul Arqam to a new entity called Rufaqa; in the present day, it is known as Global Ikhwan. She recalled vividly:

...after Darul Arqam was banned by the government...we called it the vacuum period. At that time, we were not allowed to follow Darul Arqam, all the people were gone...I felt that there was something that had

disappeared from my life. At the beginning, I didn't know what was that? Day by day... I felt that I had actually lost my life's direction. My heart was so empty. Everyday...I went to work; came home from work...but there was no purpose to life.

(Pn. Faridah)

Lasch sheds light on the essentiality of 'home'. 'Home' becomes a 'haven' and 'refuge'. A sense of 'inner homelessness' is more bearable for people who acquire emotional security in home (Lasch quoted in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim1995:49). Participation in the Islamic movement is like a construction of an 'ideal home'. It advocates an Islamic way of life, providing a sense of belonging to its adherents. In this research, the OWC elite Muslim women who participated in the Islamic movement have shown their abilities to cope with the complexities of life. They have obtained the spiritual pillar which provides 'inner shelter', security and strength for them when facing 'inner homelessness'.

Pn. Rohaida came to know more about Darul Arqam during her life in the United States. As discussed previously, she felt 'inner homelessness' in an alien environment. Fortunately, Darul Arqam's teams coincidentally paid a visit to Malaysian students in the United State. Religious activities and personnel exchange sessions were held with Malaysian students. Due to the dullness of daily life, Pn. Rohaida decided to join Darul Arqam's activities. She obtained an abundance of reading materials from the team members. These reading materials augmented her knowledge about God, the Prophet and the Islamic way of life. She felt herself becoming calm, secure and enriched. She made use of Islamic knowledge to answer her doubts and uncertainties of the future. In addition, she was no longer feeling lonely and spiritual emptiness.

[My] father and mother were far away from me...what could I do when I was empty and lonely? Eventually, I found Ustaz Ashaari [the former leader of Darul Arqam]...the forgiving man. After that, I start to worship God...treat him as my role model. I feel grateful...I am more appreciative of the happiness given by God. Even if there is difficulty...it doesn't matter...I know it is a test given by God [a test to obtain better life in the

hereafter]...God provides the best place for me to share my problems...to pour out my troubles and unhappiness when I feel lonely and empty.

(Pn. Rohaida)

People who participate in religious movements are also endowed with a strong sense of conviction. They will become more confident and self-determined. In addition, they could achieve clear guidance and an emotional anchor from a life in piety. For Pn. Faridah, the disbandment of Darul Arqam was similar to the destruction of the 'ideal home' that she had embraced since she was adolescent. It provoked a sense of directionlessness in her life. Her narrative stated that the Darul Arqam had served as a beacon of light which she could not bear to lose.

I have told you...I felt empty during the vacuum period...From then on, I realized that happiness is not because of...I earn so much money, [it is] also not because of our husband or children. It strongly depends on God's feelings existing in my heart. It lets me feel calm and happy. If we don't have God's feeling with us, for sure...everything will be damaged. Life feels meaningless. So this is the fact that I realized. Hence, I will hold this principle in my entire life. I can't afford to face that emptiness anymore.

(Pn. Faridah)

On the other hand, Pn. Zainah felt that being Islamized offered her a sense of inner shelter. It helped to resolve the obstacles and difficulties occurring in her daily life. Pn. Zainah has been allocated to manage Darul Arqam's business premises in a foreign country. Due to work exigencies, she often needs to travel. She related that unpredictable challenges and problems often occurred while she traveled. However, her life in piety provided her strength and courage to go through every predicament.

For your information, my work involves frequent travel. In most circumstances, we can't travel alone. Islam states that Muslim women should travel with two or three companions. However, in an emergency, we are allowed to travel alone. When I travel alone, I depend so much on God...I feel that I am 100% dependent on God. For example, there was a time I traveled alone to Mecca. I had to pass Beirut, Lübnan...these are Israeli places where wars erupted frequently. At the immigration gate, I saw

all the passengers queuing in front of me were not allowed to pass through the gate at immigration control. But I had no problem at all. It was so amazing! How could you imagine? I am not familiar with the languages ... and I have to pass through four countries...Beirut, Lübnan, Syria and Jordan before arriving in Mecca. How comes? I saw the immigration officer stopping others from entering the boarding gate. He threw back the passport to passengers...threw it in their faces. But I had no problem at all. I am sure it is because of God...God helps me. You might not believe it; for me, I choose to believe that God gives me a hand. He gives me strength to go through difficulties, he eases my life...

(Pn. Zainah)

In the Islamic religious movement, individuals obtain the ability to re-examine their meanings, values and purpose of existence in the current world. In the modern day, people are often confronted with existential crises. The emphasis on a material life alters an individual's mental horizon. Though modern men and women have an abundance of material wealth, yet their souls are empty (Alain 2005). They still experience loneliness, anxiety and aimlessness in daily life. The deep sense of 'inner homelessness' continues to exist. However, the pursuit of Islamic piety serves as a source of conviction for the individual. The individual feels a sense of purpose, order and continuity in their mind. They obtain security and have positive views of themselves, the world and the future (Giddens 1991). In this research, the OWC elite Muslim women show their ability to make changes to their interpretation of life. Looking into their views, it can be seen that the pursuit of inner peace and tranquility outweigh the material wealth of the current world. By adhering to God's will, the OWC elite Muslim women have obtained satisfaction, calmness, security.

In this world, we are not born to be Malay [Muslim], born to adhere to Malay customs and traditions. We must think...what is life all about? It's not as simple as...eat when we are hungry; drink if we are thirsty. When growing up, we get married to someone. Sorry to say, such living ...it's like an animal! Look...a cow eats if hungry, drinks if thirsty. Its rhythm of life is vulgar and innocuous...We [human being] are different, right? It is a shame! If we don't know what is the meaning of life...After joining Darul Arqam,

after seeing Abuya [Ustaz Ashaari], my mind changed...My parents are traditional Muslims...when I was young...I had been taught to study hard, so that I could enter to university and get a secure job. They thought that a higher salary could bring along a comfortable life. However, when I joined Darul Arqam, I started to think...the wealth of materials...was it really good? I am thinking...those celebrities from western countries...let's say Michael Jackson, is he happy? No doubt, he is so rich...but he lacks of a sense of security. You see...he needs security guards to protect him every day. [He] is scared of robbery, scared of being kidnapped...the material wealth...I am thinking, although we have a lot of money, we spend...we have money to enjoy any foods that we like, but end up we have diseases! The most important is that we must have the God's feeling with us...

(Pn. Rohaida)

My life becomes peaceful...seldom has difficulties...I feel my heart calm. Obedient Wives Club...When I joined... [my life] changed. My heart feels calm...Nowadays, people just look at money [pursue of material wealth]. Although I don't have money, yet I am still happy. Money is not important... [It is better that] the Prophet loves me...My life is happy now. I live in blessed calmness...

(Pn. Hajah)

The most important is that we get a secure life...to be secure in this world, as well as life in hereafter. Security in the current world includes having a blissful life, living in tranquility. There is no quarreling, no fighting, our children are safe... [They] won't become rape victims or involved in social crimes. In the Obedient Wives Club, I could escape from most problems suffered by outsiders [non-members of OWC]. I obtain security in this world, as well as in the hereafter in the future.

(Pn. Zakiah)

Pn. Azizah depicted how a life in piety had changed her philosophy of life. She was taught in a very western way since being a child. However, when she became a committee member in Darul Arqam, she found that Islamic belief is a great source of comfort and

solace. It gradually drove her to shift from the western lifestyle to an Islamic way of life. She expressively related her story:

Once, I had a comfortable life [no financial woes] ...I did well, and also my husband. But there was a morning...I woke up, feeling restless. I started to ask myself...my husband...we get up in the morning every day, we go to work, we pay a debt and then we die...is that...what is life about? Where could I find the answer? I wasn't like that before...So I said okay to my husband, I booked the flight to Mecca [pilgrimage] ...I went there...I found God received me so well, I felt comfortable. After the reception I got there, I said to myself that I had to do something. When I came back...we went around, to every Mosque, every lecturer...about 15 years ago, a friend brought me books about Islam [reading materials from Darul Arqam]. I felt right reading it...this was what I'd been looking for...So I jumped into it [join Darul Arqam] ...I changed everything about my lifestyle then on when I found a right teacher. He is a late executive chairman of Global Ikhwan. He taught me a lot of things...I felt right and calm...I felt he managed to bring me close to God, the way I wanted to...

(Pn. Azizah)

With the transition to a modern society, one's values and roles have been challenged and scrutinized. In comparison with the typical 'modern patients'—'suffering from a deep sense of meaningless, coupled with emptiness...an existence vacuum'—described by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995:48), the OWC elite Muslim women's discourses, in contrary, disclosed that living in the revived spiritualism of Islamic revivalism actually helped them to seize the certainty of future.

Malaysian Muslim women are customarily confronted with existential anxieties about their entry to modernity and its costs (Stivens 1998:112).The embrace of re-emergent Islam served as a solution to these existential anxieties. In this 'ideal home', the OWC elite Muslim women have acquired a clarity for themselves. They are able to answer the questions: 'Who am I? Why am I here? What is my destiny?'

6-2 Love and Intimacy in Family Ties

To continue discussing how the OWC elite Muslim women actually get better about themselves in Islamic piety, I would like to look into their relationships in the realms of marriage and family. Marriage is a central aspect in the lives of Muslim men and women. Muslims are encouraged to get married,⁴⁹ and a Muslim family is established in accordance with Islamic principles.

In the high modernity milieu, 'home' becomes more essential to human beings in comparison with the past. 'Home' should be a place to pursue a joyous and blithe life; home is also a place for individuals to share sadness and sorrow. What does 'ideal home' mean in the OWC elite Muslim women's life journey? For them, it is a place that plays a significant role in the creation of a better society.

[Home/family] ...is very important. Although it is the smallest unit in society, but all the small unit unites together to create a society, a country and a world. But we must understand that this process starts from the individual. It starts from two individuals when they get married, they have babies. They form a community and become larger... a country. It is very important; you see...an undeveloped country is normally caused by broken families. So our group [Obedient Wives Club] emphasizes the development of an individual's personality. Firstly, family issues needs to be resolved. This is the most basic objective of the Obedient Wives Club.

(Pn. Zainah)

The family is a basic unit...society created from household units. State building, nation building, even the world, comes from the household unit...If the family is okay [peaceful and less chaotic], the country is also okay.

(Pn. Sharifah)

⁴⁹Ibn Mas'ud reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, 'O young men, if you are able to support a wife, then get married. Verily, it restrains the eyes and protects the private parts, but whoever is not able to do so then he has the duty to fast because indeed it is a means of control'. Please refer to Hadith on Marriage: <http://www.dailyhadithonline.com/2012/04/11/hadith-on-marriage-men-who-are-able-to-get-married-should-do-so-but-if-they-cannot-they-must-perform-fasting-to-control-their-sexual-desires/>

The family unit creates society...if the family...all children behave well, society will be good [lack of social problems]. The children receive proper teaching from the parents...They will contribute to society. So everything starts from the family.

(Pn. Hajah)

While the home or family in modern society is flooded with a myriad of problems, the OWC elite Muslim women, on the other hand, advocate living an Islamic way of life. They believe that this helps to provide solutions to them, enabling them to cope with the anarchy and chaos of the modern family. As illustrated at the beginning of this chapter, individualism is in the process of upsetting the institution of marriage. Responding to this predominant dilemma, the OWC elite Muslim women relate how the family mode in the 'ideal home' is much more effective in providing a sense of love and intimacy between the family members. It helps to maintain the harmony and tranquility of a family.

There are two types of polygamous family modes practiced by the members of the Obedient Wives Club. In one situation all the co-wives live together under the same roof; on the other hand, there are polygamous families in which the co-wives live apart from each other. They have their own houses in different places.

Pn. Laila is wife number three. She has three co-wives in her family. Her husband is the third son of Ustaz Ashaari, the former leader of Darul Arqam. She is living in a big family. Besides her husband and three co-wives, there are twenty-four children in the family. A rotating polygamy schedule is established to fairly divide their time with the husband. Through Pn. Laila's narratives, there is strong consensus among co-wives. They co-operate with each other in every aspect of life, such as handling domestic work, taking care of their husband's daily needs, as well as looking after the children. In comparison with a polygamous family in which the co-wives live apart, she felt that living under the same roof made it easier for them to share responsibilities. The children also have close ties with each other.

We are living under the same roof...in the same house...the polygamous lifestyle is different from a monogamous one. For example, we have our schedule...for example, today is my turn to accompany the husband,

tomorrow my co-wives...we follow the schedule. Unless when my husband goes out, he will choose one of us to accompany him. If he is at home...no problem...we will refer to the schedule. We [among co-wives] understand each other well...just follow the schedule. I won't try to break the schedule, neither do they. In our house, we reserve a master room for our husband. If tonight is my turn with the husband, I will then go to bed at the master room. Same to my co-wives as well...It is convenient for us...we put our husband clothes, all his daily necessities in the master room, easier for him to get his stuff when needed. If he is going on a business trip, we can help to pack his luggage easily...we just need to manage everything in the master room. Living in the same house...the children could see their father every day, even though today is not their mother's turn with the father. If living separately, it is a little bit difficult. Our children also feel happy to have so many sisters and brothers, though they own different biological mothers. But they feel they are all the same...

(Pn. Laila)

Apart from that, there are also the OWC elite Muslim women, who told me that they live apart from the other co-wives. Due to the working lifestyle in Darul Arqam, which allocates its members to different business premises, the OWC elite Muslim women hence choose to live separately according to their working station. In this kind of polygamous family, the rotating polygamy schedule is arranged on a more flexible basis.

Normally the schedule is arranged on a weekly basis...the husband will come here one week...the other week, he will go to my co-wives' house. But we all have a mutual understanding...if the husband is busy, running business errands, so no problem...I redha [accept something without hard feeling] ...we have knowledge...polygamy...it is normal for us to face in this situation...polygamy is a kind of co-operation relationship, we are all working for Islam...so we could accept, no problem.

(Pn. Hajah)

[The arrangement is] flexible...in Obedient Wives Club, everyone has their own obligations. So husband and wives...we arrange according to a flexible

basis. We are considerate to each other. Sometimes I am also busy and do not manage to fulfill my wifely duties...so I ask my co-wives to help on this. It doesn't mean that I have to follow the schedule strictly...It is not like...when comes to my turn, no matter how busy, I also have to rush back to serve the husband...even if I am far away. No...we could discuss...

(Pn. Faridah)

In GISB, we have our own responsibilities. For the time being, my husband stays in Sarawak, as well as my three co-wives. Sometimes I need to go to Germany...it is part of my job in GISB. When I am around, my husband will come to visit me...or I will go back to Sarawak too. In GISB, there are also polygamous families living under same roof, depending on the husband...how he is going to manage his family. We don't fix that everyone must live in same house, it is because we all have different responsibilities in GISB.

(Pn. Zainah)

...depending on his working schedule...the location...normally we try to arrange it equally to everyone...every wife has the chance to stay with our husband...means we discuss together...we arrange base on location...if husband has a business trip at Kuala Lumpur, he will come to my house. My two co-wives stay at Kelantan...so the husband will stay with them when he works there. Now, I am staying alone in Kuala Lumpur. GISB...our business premises are located everywhere...so everyone has to travel around...this is our working lifestyle, so we arrange based on our working schedule...no way for us to calculate on this small matter...I have been married for thirteen years...it always happens in my daily life...sometimes our husband stays with me...sometimes he comes to visit me...this is our lifestyle...

(Pn. Abdullah)

The foregoing shows that a polygamous family mode promoted in this 'ideal home' depends on the location and working basis. In comparison with a polygamous marriage as publicly understood, the OWC elite Muslim women do not really emphasize the time

arrangement between husband and co-wives. This flexible polygamous lifestyle eases husband and wife who have own obligations and duties in GISB.

Tan's (2009) study on the Malaysian polygamous marriage paid little attention to the interaction among co-wives in a polygamous family. Co-wives living apart from each other tend to convey the message that their life is actually tantamount to a monogamous family lifestyle in modern society. Hence, Muslims are similar as modern men and women. They have to face the dilemma of 'liquid modernity'—frailty of family structures. Solid relationships do not exist among the family members. The family life is shorter and easier to demise (Bauman 2003).

In addition, a polygamous marriage also raises public concerns because it seems to undermine the harmonious relationships in the family. The polygamous husband may not visit his wives in regular roster and give them just maintenance. It leads to social problems such as jealousy among wives, conflict among children and the subordination of women (Nurmila 2007; Blackburn 2004).

However, in light of the OWC elite Muslim women's narratives on the interaction with husband, co-wives and children, it has been found that close kinship ties are maintained between themselves. Firstly, while the public assumes there is a competitive relationship between co-wives, the OWC elite Muslim women demonstrated the strong connection and bond with their co-wives in daily life, even in the situation where co-wives stay indifferent places.

For co-wives living apart, special occasions serve as the precious time for them to gather with their co-wives. For instances, Pn. Zainah is staying in Selangor; her co-wives and husband stay in Sarawak. Pn. Zainah tends to meet her co-wives during special occasions. She is actively connects with her co-wives

We will gather together on special occasions. For example, during Aidilfitri [Islamic New Year]...we will gather together...in normal days, we are at different places...I will also call or sms [sending phone text messages] my co-wives...chit chatting. When there is a special occasion, we gather together...we will feel closer to each other. The children also feel happy

because they have four mothers...yes...happy...they say there are more people to care about them, love them...

(Pn. Zainah)

On the other hand, Pn. Hajah said that having a co-wife is the same as getting a good companion; they could spend time together doing domestic work, having the same hobbies and sharing the same happiness. She is a first wife and she has one co-wife living in Thailand. For her, the meeting time with co-wife is a happy moment.

We do not live together...but sometimes she comes to visit me...we can go out shopping, we can do house chores together...I feel comfortable...enjoyable...our children also feel happy...I am happy to have such a big family [without feeling alone]...

(Pn. Hajah)

The stories of the OWC elite Muslim women show that there is no difference between a biological mother and co-mother in the family. It is a mutual responsibility for all the wives to raise and educate every child. Being a mother, they fulfill their motherly roles by providing love, caring and sharing their children. It is different from Nurmila's (2007) study which found that a polygamous lifestyle brings negative repercussions to the children. Children are neglected and confronted with emotional problems. In the Obedient Wives Club, the polygamous lifestyle builds close family bonds for both parties. The children receive full trust and caring from the parents; the mothers, the OWC elite Muslim women manage to obtain feelings of closeness and deference from their children. Through the close interaction with the children of their co-wives, the OWC elite Muslim women have actually achieved joy and happiness in their life.

I don't have my own children. But I can get love and caring from my co-wives' children. I can still experience how the feeling of being a mother is. In our family, I give my love and caring to their children, and their children respect me as well. They treat me as their own mother. They never neglect me...they won't treat me as stranger...call me as step mother. Our [among co-wives] status are same...nobody is called as a step mother... we love and care for each other.

(Pn. Sharifah)

Living together? Never before...but sometimes...yes...we gather together...sometimes I send my kids to the co-wives' houses. Their children will also visit me during school holidays. There was a time my co-wives' children attended the boarding school at Kuala Lumpur, so I helped to take care of them...because my co-wives are far away from Kuala Lumpur. The children are around 18 or 20 years old...they got used to having three mothers. They accept me as their own mother. For example, they will ask me to buy them foods...drinks...sharing with me what is interesting...what has happened in the school. I always see them telling their friends that they have three mothers. When I go back to my kampung [Malay settlement or village]...I will bring them along. My own parents also feel happy...they could accept my polygamous marriage...they feel happy because of having so many grandchildren. Especially my mother...she feels happy to see that there are so many grandchildren coming to visit her. My own children are only around 12 to 13 years old...but the co-wives' children have grown up...18 years old...20 years old. They have a car license...they can fetch me to go back to my kampung...when my mother sees this...she feels happy.

(Pn. Abdullah)

In addition, Pn. Abdullah also delineated the close relationship of her biological children with the co-wives' children. She is the third-wife with two co-wives. There are fifteen children in their family. Among them, seven children were given birth by Pn Nur Hidayiti. She is living in Kuala Lumpur while her co-wives live at Kelantan. She told how the children have a strong sense of siblinghood. Even though they live part, but the children are actively maintaining their connections with each other. They tend to visit each other during school holidays. The elder brothers and sisters look after and take care of the needs of their younger brothers and sisters.

Talking about children...even though they have different biological mothers, but it is not a problem on this. They treat each other as siblings. If they do not meet each other quite sometimes...they will ask and be concerned...I am glad that they can get along. My children are around eight to twelve years old, while my co-wives' children have grown up. They are all around seventeen to twenty-two years old...so they bring my children to go

shopping...playing in the garden. My children...they study at a boarding school...sometimes my co-wives' children drive them to school...buy a new songkok [Muslim cap]...new shoes to them. They take care of my children. During school holidays, my children like to stay at their house. If my co-wives' children come to visit me, they will buy snacks for my children. Besides that, my co-wives' daughter, who has grown up...helps to look after my children. When I was giving birth...the elder sister looked after my other children. We help each other... so I don't need to seek help from our own parents at kampung [Malay settlement or village]. This is the beauty of polygamy...we could always discuss together...if we have problems...we could seek help from our co-wives...we could discuss about our children's problems...sharing our problems together...

(Pn. Abdullah)

According to the Malaysia Islamic Development Department (JAKIM), one of the reasons that cause Muslim couple's divorce rates to increase steadily is ineffective communication between spouses.⁵⁰ Especially in the 'liquid modernity' era, 'failure of the relationship is more often than not a failure of communication' (Bauman 2003:16). In a polygamous marriage, the situation is more complex and perplexing to husband and wife. It is because the marital relationship comprises more than two people, where the husband needs to negotiate with all his wives at the same time.

In this research, the interviewees explained that the Obedient Wives Club emphasizes a spouse's complementary relationship. The husband is the leader in the household while the wife becomes an assistant. When severe conflicts occur, the husband has full authority to decide. However, it doesn't mean that the husband could solely make any decision. There must be a compromise between the husband and all his wives. They work together as a team. They learn to understand each other's needs and wants, knowing to give and take once in a while. When the husband's action contravenes Islamic teaching, the wife could raise an objection.

⁵⁰Please refer to <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/muslim-divorces-hit-all-time-high-in-malaysia> (The Malaysian Insider 2011/05/27).

We discuss together. Human beings tend to discuss together, right? We discuss softly, try to solve it nicely. We are human beings...sometimes the husband might do wrong as well. So we need to remind each other. There is a voice [God] reminding us. We must tolerate each other...

(Pn. Hasanah)

We don't argue...we discuss together. People may ask: 'what if the husband is wrong?' But I will think that...to the husband he may be right. Who's to say that if I want something in this way, my husband wants it in that way, who may I say he is wrong? To him, he is right. So we must learn to give and take, in the household...we discuss together. But in most instances, as a wife, I rather let him decide...he is the leader in the household...

(Pn. Azizah)

If we can't accept what the husband has done, we could discuss with him. But we need to ensure that we don't be too excessive...like...shout at him. Don't! We discuss in the proper way, try to understand...our husband and co-wives. I don't deny that it always happens. We are all human being...

(Pn. Zakiah)

The 'ideal home' bring a sense of belonging and togetherness to the OWC elite Muslim women. Whether they are staying together or living separately; they still play a part and contribute to maintain the strong connection with each other. In addition, the 'ideal home' lifestyle simultaneously helps to resolve the modern dilemma—modern men fail to gain inner security due to the frailty of the human bond (Bauman 2003).The OWC elite Muslim women have re-bounded the frailty of family structures. In 'ideal home', love and caring is cultivated in everyday life, to everyone. They feel secure, calm and connected with each other.

6-3 Enjoy Personal Freedom without Trading-in Family Cohesion

Lastly, this 'ideal home' in fact serves as the solution to the conflicting desires of modern people as described by Bauman (2003)—'a desires to tighten human bonds yet keep them loose'. The family mode in 'ideal home' could more effectively accommodate a husband's and wife's emotional needs, curtailing the occurrence of household conflicts.

OWC elite Muslim women gain balance between 'tighten' and 'loose'. The more flexible lifestyle and freedom gained between husband and wife helps to adjust their mindsets and attitudes, forming a peaceful family life to them.

In a polygamous marriage, Muslim women are customarily deemed temporary deserted wives. The husband negligence problem sparks heated debate in society. Polygamous Muslim women are expected to exchange their discomfort at sharing a husband for the social status and economic security that they received from their husband (Patricia 1997; Nurmila 2007).

However, the OWC elite Muslim women explained that the absence of the husband never became a critical concern for them. A husband's absence did not affect the intimate relationship between the OWC elite Muslim women and the husband; instead, they always felt an overwhelming gratitude and appreciation for every short moment together. In addition, when the husband was not around, the OWC Muslim women would have personal freedom to cultivate their self-interests and run their own activities. This mode of family led them to reevaluate their dependent relationship with the husband.

In a dual income family...both husband and wife work outside. You see...in the monogamous family, if the wife is tired from work, she keeps refusing to fulfill the husband's sexual needs, so we can imagine...what will be happen then? In the Obedient Wives Club, we seldom have this problem. For my case, my husband does not stay with me all the time, so it makes him appreciate me more when we meet up...makes us appreciate every moment we spend together...This is the special function in polygamous marriage.

(Pn. Zainah)

Polygamy is different [compared to monogamy]. The absence of the husband during certain periods, gives me a chance to become more independent. I am not too attached to my husband. In GISB, I have my own duties. While it is my turn with my husband, I will take care of him; while he is not around, I have free time to focus on my job.

(Pn. Zakiah)

Before my family had a co-wife, I always felt that my husband is everything in my life...you see...there are a lot of songs...novels...love stories...telling us that a husband is our life...all sorts of things. Women are driven by nafsu. If the husband always sticks with us, it would become like Romeo and Juliet...they attach too closely to each other. If we do not enter a polygamous marriage, probably we will over enlarge the importance of our husband in our life. For example, we depend on his financial support, emotional support...everything. We tend to be very attached to him. But after polygamy, we need to separate from our husband during certain times. So when he is not around, I could think about myself. I am free...I could have time to do my own things. I could share with God [Prayer]...God is the best place for us...we must know, God creates us not of the husband. So it is better for me to get closer to God [Prayer].

(Pn. Rohaida)

Furthermore, looking into dual income families in modern society, the fact that husband and wife simultaneously enter the job market is identified as the main reason for marital instability. As Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995:143) pointed out: ‘At first sight the barriers in the job market seems to shore up the nuclear family, but in fact they fill the corridors of the divorce courts and the waiting rooms of marriage counselors’.

It is now impossible for modern people to restore the old status quo for the sexes in private and public life, which means the husband is involved solely in the job market while the wife become a house-wife. It contravenes the ideology and gender moral order in the modern democratic society. While people are caught in the middle, the ‘ideal home’ provides the alternative way for women to cope with family crises, enabling them to achieve self-development and maintain an intimate family relationship.

The ‘ideal home’ endows the OWC elite Muslim women with personal freedom to pursue self-interest and developments. In a modern society, having children is as if imposing the burden on the individual. Modern people who have children may need to lower their professional ambitious, to ‘sacrifice a career’ (Bauman 2003:43). Nonetheless, the OWC elite Muslim women in this research showed that they have actually obtained freedom to build up their career, and pursue self-actualization. They fulfill the expectations

of Islamic ideology by playing their wifely and mother roles. At the same time, they are also able to respond to the modern democratic ideology which calls for women's contribution in the labor force market, obtaining economical independence and professional security.

Polygamy eases my life. When my co-wife visits my house [during gathering time at special occasions], she helps me a lot! Every day, I have so many household chores to do. When she is around, she could release my burden, we divide the house chores...she cooks for us, on the other hand, I help to look after her children... the moments we spend together...working together...I feel very happy...we have time to rest...can be more relaxed.

(Pn. Hajah)

...I often travel...it is because Global Ikhwan's business premises are located widely in many places. When I travel to Syria...Global Ikhwan opened a restaurant at Syria. I need someone to take care of my children...if I don't practice a polygamous lifestyle, how could I cope with it? If I am alone, who will take care of my husband? A polygamous lifestyle helps me a lot. We could co-operate with each other...

(Pn. Aminah)

A polygamous lifestyle is applicable to the family in which the husband and wife have their own careers...because...if the wife has to go for a business trip, so who is responsible to take care of the husband and children? In my family, I have three co-wives, so we can divide our time to take care of the family. The time I travel to Germany [handling Darul Arqam's business], my co-wives will take care of my husband. They prepare meals, wash my husband's clothes and look after my children. I never worry about my children... Even when I travel to Germany...even if I am away from home for three months...but I just feel calm...I know that my co-wives are always beside me...helping me. You must not misunderstand...we do not make use of co-wives...we are taught to help each other. If they are busy, I also help them. These are the advantages of the polygamous lifestyle. If there is only one wife in the family...it is difficult for her to cope.

(Pn. Zainah)

I am a female unit manager [in Darul Arqam]. The polygamous lifestyle is very helpful... [It] eases my life. When I am not around, who takes of my husband? Cooking...washing clothes...All done by my co-wife! Sometimes ...I am busy. Perhaps I can't give full attention...provide caring and love to my children. However, my co-wife could help to do these things. She even gives more than me [love and caring to children] ...better than me...she is a childcare teacher...she knows well about children...

(Pn. Rohaida)

To sum up, the 'ideal home' advocated by the Obedient Wives Club has helped to cope with the dilemmas of modernity. It releases the OWC elite Muslim women from the feeling of 'inner homelessness', instead, providing them the security and protection to overcome the fear of chronic uncertainty in the modern world.

Apart from that, this 'ideal home' also serves as a platform for them to obtain their own real life's meaning. This purpose of life outweighs the pursuit of short-term happiness from the current world. The strong sense of security gained by the OWC elite Muslim women further provides them with the creativity to sketch their own life journey. They are able to reinterpret and conquer every difficulty in daily life, and ensure they have a better life in the hereafter.

Last but not least, residing in the hyper-individualist society, men and women are no longer bonded by obligations and responsibilities. The non-conventional relationship, with no rules, has caused chaos between men and women. The emergence of an 'ideal home' and its family mode provides the OWC elite Muslim women an alternative way to resolve the tensions of modern gender relations. Besides maintaining intimate family ties, the OWC elite Muslim women have also obtained the personal freedom to pursue self-development and self-fulfillment.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

A large amount of research seems to conclude that Islamic veiling, polygamy, and women's submission to the husband, in fact, has close links with a patriarchal-religious system. These practices have long been regarded as tools to oppress Muslim women. Muslim women's pursuit of an Islamic way of life is deemed to cause them to be secondary and inferior vis-a-vis Muslim men.

The emergence of the Obedient Wives Club in Malaysian society reflects the same condition. A group of Muslim women, who are highly educated and have obtained high socioeconomic status advocate that a Muslim wife should submit to her husband, take up her wifely and motherly responsibilities, as well as fulfilling her husband's sexual desires. They believe that their advocacies help to resolve social malaises, for instances, divorce, family breakdown, baby abandonment, etc.

The Obedient Wives Club advocacies are engulfed in great controversy. The OWC elite Muslim women's act of 're-traditionalization' is deemed backward and contradictory to the modern notions of gender. For Malaysia's political elites, the existence of the Obedient Wives Club is a strange phenomenon. Political elites who adopt the liberal feminism concepts tend to criticize the Obedient Wives Club's members for internalizing patriarchy values and norms.

What exactly do the OWC elite Muslim women think about themselves in relation to the issues of oppression? The OWC elite Muslim women are highly educated professionals, associated with high modernity values in everyday life, however they act contrary to the prevailing modern concepts. The real implications of their acts deserve to have more attention. This has become the major concern of this research.

Some studies of third world women are too simplistic to define Muslim women as the victims of a patriarchal system without gaining a deeper understanding of the women's different stories, cultures and experiences. The importing of western feminist epistemologies into the locale, namely Malaysian society in this research, in fact has not dealt adequately with the texts of the OWC elite Muslim women.

In order to improve the validity of this research, in depth interviews were conducted with eleven OWC elite Muslim women. Through their life stories the

interviewee's perspectives, subtle feelings and behavior on a subject could be explored. The life stories depict the life journey of the OWC elite Muslim women, and provided insight into the subjectivity of the OWC elite Muslim women in Malaysia with reference to their life of Islamic piety. In addition, complementary data from online news, TV and radio talk shows was integrated to analyze the life stories of the OWC elite Muslim women.

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, a wave of Islamic revivalism was sweeping the Muslim world. The Middle East countries enforced the full panoply of Islamic laws, abrogating the westernized legal codes and social norms which caused acute economic and political crises. The success of Middle East countries simultaneously gave rise to the *dakwah* movement in Malaysian society. Malay populations began to apply Islam as 'din' (way of life), in order to resolve the Malay dilemmas which were caused by the imitation of a western developmental model in Malaysian society. The *dakwah* movement brought perennial impacts to the socio-spatial of Malay society, including the breakdown of the *adat* (Malay customary law) and the changes of Malay gender order and relations. In addition, religious institutions were set up. Darul Arqam, the religious institution which is associated with the Obedient Wives Club was also established within this social context. The *dakwah* movement served as a catalyst to alter Muslim womanhood and kinship. It raised the awareness of Muslim women to participate in the Islamic revival movement. In this study, the interviewees are a group of Muslim women inspired by the force of *dakwah* in Malaysia.

The influences of Islamic revivalism still exist in Malaysian society. Nowadays, while criticizing the westernization of Malaysia which caused severe social malaises, the Obedient Wives Club is searching for solutions from Islam. However, their advocacies have trapped them into the image of oppressed women. The public assume that the OWC elite Muslim women's practice of an Islamic way of life is a result of brainwashing and is indulged by a false consciousness. They are framed as helpless women lacking autonomy, agency and the ability to negotiate within the structures of Islamic life. In addition, the OWC elite Muslim women's striving towards piety is regarded as a way of life that causes them to be disruptive, passive and self-deprecating.

Instead of seeing the OWC elite Muslim women as oppressed, this study has found that their choice of being Islamized has, in fact, helped them to embrace the subjectivity of

a 'pious Muslim women'. They exert strenuous effort to augment their Islamic knowledge. Exposure to the various religious institutions further raises the OWC elite Muslim women's awareness towards their Muslim identity. They adhere to the commandments of Islam, such as adopting veiling practice, and showing their willingness to enter into a polygamous marriage. In addition, by means of an Islamic way of life, the OWC Muslim women are capable of setting agendas of their own and redefining their roles in Muslim society. They are actively involved in the public sphere, working towards building a more loving society. These changes in fact reveal their 'consentization' process rather than saying they are indulged by false consciousness. The OWC elite Muslim women enter into concrete situations, inquiring and knowing reality better, and making decisions based on their own thoughts and willingness. Their thoughts are the result of a natural combination of experience, desires and knowledge. In this study, it is shown that the OWC elite Muslim women do not blindly adhere to alien thoughts and feelings that approach them from the outside, on the contrary, they review the Islamic teaching they were taught as children and seek a way to deepen their knowledge of Islam. They are 'the originators of their mental activities and have the ability to discover the world outside or inside themselves' (Fromm 1942).

Secondly, based on the concept of 'Equal before God', the OWC elite Muslim women show that despite being Muslim women, they are unable to escape from the Islamic rules that structure their lives, nevertheless, by using their creativity in everyday life, they call attention to a gender moral order that prioritizes the fulfillment of God's will. According to this gender moral order, men and women play different roles, yet have equal status in the eyes of God. Muslim women submit to God to obtain higher status in comparison with the irreligious Muslim men. The OWC elite Muslim women who thus apply this gender moral order are able to counter the public's perception that Muslim women are less significant than Muslim men; Muslim women living in piety internalize the values and norms of the patriarchal system. By fulfilling their motherly and wifely roles, the OWC elite Muslim women have attained pride and honor within Muslim society. Furthermore, in the light of the OWC elite Muslim women's narratives, every aspect of their life must conform to Islamic principles. Through these rules and requirements, the OWC elite Muslim women are able to show their full autonomy and agency when negotiating with the husband within the household unit. For instance, if the husband is not

devout Muslim, Muslim wives are not obliged to submit to the husband. Furthermore, they argue that the husband's right of beating the wife only serves as a deterrent for Muslim women against breaking Islamic teachings. Facing an abusive husband, the OWC elite Muslim women are aware of, and proclaim, their right to ask for a divorce. In terms of marital sexual activity, the OWC elite Muslim women emphasize that it must be conducted with correct attentiveness. They heighten the importance of mutual understanding between the husband and wife rather than seeing their own selves as sex slaves of their husband.

Lastly, looking into the OWC elite Muslim women's everyday life experiences, this study found that Muslim women have successfully crafted themselves into religious subjectivity. Their choice of becoming Islamized seems to construct an 'ideal home' for them. This 'ideal home' provides strengths and supports that bring better transformation to them instead of disrupting their religious subjectivity. In this high modernity era, changes occur unpredictably and uncontrollably. Extricate from the traditional bonds provides freedom to modern individuals; simultaneously it leads modern individuals to confront a sense of 'inner homelessness' in their daily life. Modern individuals customarily feel aimless, directionless and insecure in modern society. In face of the modernity chaos, this 'ideal home' provides spiritual strengths for the OWC elite Muslim women to ward off their fear and anxiety. Being Islamized brings them peace of mind and serves as guidance for them when going through difficult times. Besides that, it also helps them to reflect on the meaning of life and what they really want from life. On the other hand, while there are the breakdowns of family life in the modern society, and spouses encounter conflicts between the pursuits of intimate relationship and self-development, the polygamous family mode in this 'ideal home' helps extricate the OWC elite Muslim women from this modernity chaos. The OWC elite Muslim women call attention to the building of a complementary relationship between the husband and co-wives. They take full responsibility for providing love and education to their children, regardless of whether they are the biological mother or a co-mother. In addition, the co-operation between co-wives in the family further provides freedom for every one of them to become involved in different fields, so as to achieve their full potential. This 'ideal home' has helped the OWC elite Muslim women to gain a balance between their career and family role.

The Islamic revivalism is customarily seen as a movement to react against westernization and modernization. However, we actually fail to realize the changes that

Islamization brings to Muslim women. In overturning the ingrained notion of Muslim women's oppression, this study, based on the life experiences of the OWC elite Muslim women, has investigated the way the OWC elite Muslim women come to understand themselves as subjects. Through the 'conscientization' process, the OWC elite Muslim women engage in self reflection to improve their own Islamic knowledge. While criticizing westernization has brought chaos to Malaysian society, they simultaneously choose to believe in the gender moral order which places emphasis on the mutual development of human society rather than heightening only the pursuit of individualism. From their views, 'Individual', 'family' and 'society' are tied together. Harmonious families are essential for individuals to construct a society which is full of love and care, and harmonious families and a love based society would further lead individuals to attain continuous improvements and actualizations. They believe that this provides a better human existence in modern society. Through the OWC elite Muslim women striving towards the Islamic way of life, they have been able to express their power and creativity and have successfully constructed their subjectivity as 'pious Muslim women'.

Abbreviations

ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia
BN	Barisan National, National Front
DAP	Democratic Action Party
FTZ	Free Trade Zones
GERAKAN	Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, Malaysian People's Movement Party
GISB	Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad
HELWA	Hal Ehwal Wanita, ABIM's female branch
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, Malaysia Islamic Development Department
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
NEP	New Economic Policy
OPEC	Organization of Oil-Producing Countries
OWC	Obedient Wives Club
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia, Pan Malaysian Islamic Party
PKPIM	National Organization of Muslim Students
SIS	Sisters in Islam
UKM	University Kebangsaan Malaysia, National University
UMNO	United Malays National Organization

UPM	University Pertanian Malaysia, University of Putra
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia, University of Science Malaysia
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth

Glossary

<i>adat</i>	Malay customary law
<i>a-din</i>	religion as a way of life
<i>Aidilfitri</i>	Islamic New Year
<i>akad nikah</i>	religious marriage ceremony
<i>akal</i>	rationality, intelligence, self-control
<i>apa kahbar</i>	how are you
<i>baju kurung</i>	traditional Malay costume
<i>bertaqwa</i>	conscious of God's presence, perform the righteous deeds and avoid committing sin
<i>bidan</i>	midwife
<i>budak-budak</i>	children
<i>chandari</i>	Islamic dress
<i>din</i>	way of life
<i>expo</i>	exposition, a large-scale public exhibition
<i>fardu ain</i>	classes which focused on Koranic <i>tafsir</i> , <i>tauhid</i> and <i>fiqh</i>
<i>fatawa</i>	legal rulings
<i>fiqh</i>	jurisprudence
<i>fitrah</i>	instinct
<i>Hadith</i>	Koranic exegesis
<i>haji</i>	pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>halal</i>	lawful, good and permissible

<i>hijab</i>	long, loose-fitting robes
<i>ibadah</i>	religious duties
<i>ibu-ibu</i>	female leader
<i>ijtimak</i>	general get-together
<i>Imam</i>	prayer leader
<i>Islam</i>	Islamic
<i>jahiliyyah</i>	ignorance of divine guidance
<i>Jihad</i>	crusade
<i>jihadist</i>	a Muslim who involves in a crusade
<i>jilbab</i>	long and loose garment
<i>jolli duit</i>	making jolly with money
<i>jubah</i>	a long, Arabic-style flowing robes for Muslim men
<i>kampung</i>	Malay settlement or village family
<i>kebenaran agama</i>	religious truth
<i>Kelab Poligamy</i>	polygamy club
<i>Kelab Taat Suami</i>	Obedient Wives Club
<i>kesedaran</i>	self-consciousness
<i>koranic tafsir</i>	exegesis
<i>madrasah</i>	school
<i>mini-telekung</i>	small scarf covering head and neck
<i>mubaligh</i>	missionaries
<i>nafsu</i>	animality, lust, desire

<i>najis</i>	impure
<i>Namus</i>	honor
<i>nushuz</i>	recalcitrant; disruption to marital harmony
<i>padi</i>	paddy
<i>pemisahan gender</i>	sex segregation
<i>perjuangan</i>	a striving
<i>pondok</i>	traditional village religious boarding school
<i>redha</i>	accept something without hard feeling
<i>rosak</i>	damaged
<i>Rukun Negara</i>	National principles
<i>Salat</i>	worship
<i>sarong</i>	a long piece of cloth wrapped around the waist of body
<i>Sawm</i>	the fast during Ramadan
<i>sedekah</i>	Muslim religious charities
<i>Seks Suci Islam</i>	Islamic pure sex
<i>selamat pagi</i>	good morning
<i>selamat petang</i>	good afternoon
<i>sembahyang</i>	perform prayer
<i>turban</i>	headwear
<i>Shahada</i>	declaration of faith
<i>sms</i>	sending phone text messages
<i>solehah</i>	righteous

<i>songkok</i>	Muslim cap
<i>subur</i>	dawn
<i>Sunnah</i>	way of prophet
<i>Syariat</i>	Islamic legal code
<i>tarbiyah</i>	religious education
<i>tauhid</i>	theology
<i>tutup aurat</i>	veiling to protect modesty
<i>ulama</i>	religious scholars
<i>umma</i>	community of Muslim believers
<i>usrah</i>	a small religious discussion session
<i>Yayasan Anda Akademik</i>	the name of private schools launched by ABIM
<i>zakat</i>	Muslim religious taxes

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《星洲日報》(Sin Chew Jit Poh) (2011/03/05) 〈莎麗扎盼在 2015 年.女性承擔 55% 勞動力〉 (Women will comprise 55% of the Malaysian Workforce by 2015, said Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil) 。 上 網 時 間 : 2012/02/03 取 自 : <http://news.sinchew.com.my/node/195478>

《星洲日報》(Sin Chew Jit Poh) (2011/06/05) 〈妻取悅夫要比妓女更好，千依百順妻子俱樂部一語驚人〉 (Wife to please husband better than a prostitute. Obedient Wives Club hits headlines) 。 上 網 時 間 : 2012/02/03 取 自 : <http://www.sinchew.com.my/node/207182>

《星洲日報》(Sin Chew Jit Poh) (2011/06/06) 〈黃燕燕：千依百順俱樂部膚淺.婚姻應互相尊重扶持〉 (Ng Yen Yen: Obedient Wives Club is shallow minded. Marriage is based on mutual respect and support) 。 上 網 時 間 : 2012/02/03 取 自 : <http://news.sinchew.com.my/node/207297>

《當今大馬》(Malaysiakini) (2011/06/06) 〈馬華民政反對成立妻子俱樂部，砲轟侮辱女性讓馬來西亞蒙羞〉 (MCA & PGRM object to the establishment of Obedient Wives Club: degraded women and brought shame to Malaysia) 。 上 網 時 間 : 2012/02/03 取 自 : <http://m.malaysiakini.com/news/166184>

《當今大馬》(Malaysiakini) (2011/06/11) 〈允許適當打罵形同合理化暴行，婦女組織批順妻俱樂部開倒車〉 (Acknowledge wife beating is tantamount to justify violence. Women Group: Obedient Wives Club turns backward). ◦ 上網時間：2012/02/03 取自：<http://m.malaysiakini.com/news/166635>

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Darul Arqam's community, located at Bandar Country Homes, Rawang, Selangor.



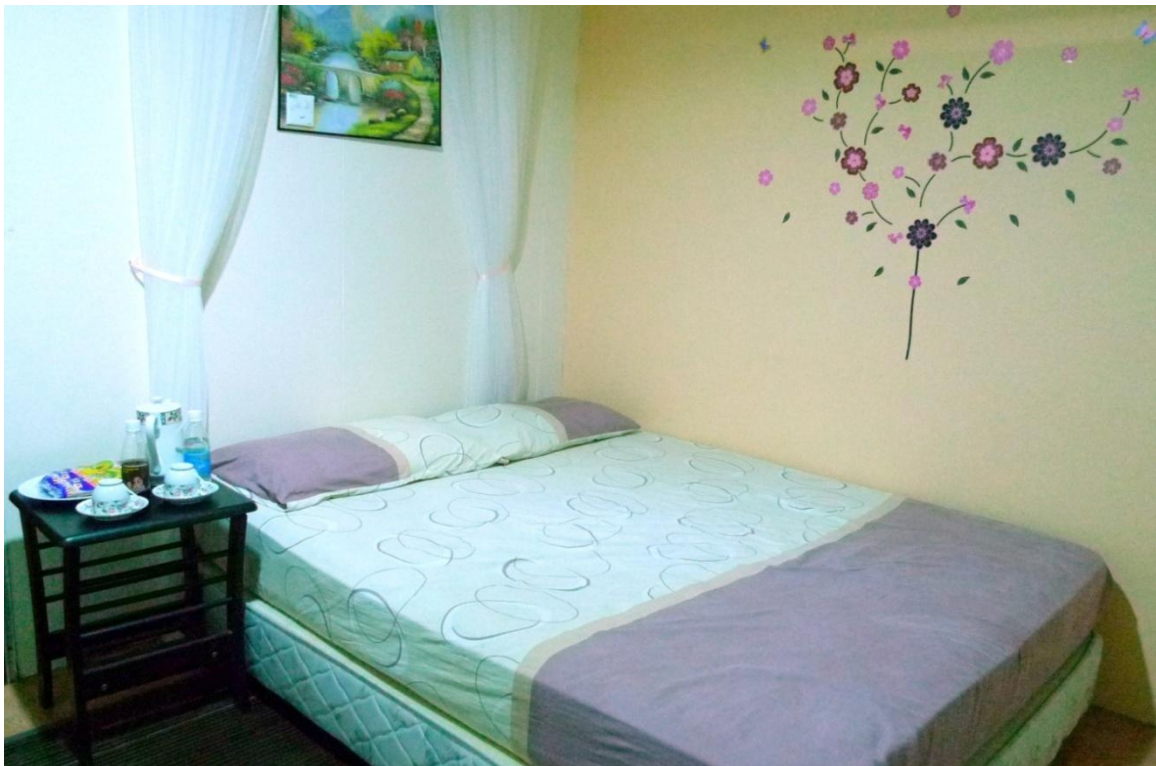
Appendix 2: Darul Arqam's polyclinic, provide maternity services for pregnant Muslim women.



Appendix 3: Darul Arqam's children playground.



Appendix 4: Darul Arqam's homestay.



Appendix 5: One of the Darul Arqam's Muslim elder leaders, Encik Amir.



Appendix 6: Darul Arqam's members are *sembahyang* (perform prayer).



Appendix 7: The children are responsible to maintain the cleanliness of the community.



Appendix 8: Muslim teens are on duty at Darul Arqam's grocery shop.



Appendix 9: Darul Arqam's restaurant, located at Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur.



Appendix 10: Muslim teen is preparing the tableware accessories in the restaurant.



Appendix 11: Muslim teens are cooking in the restaurant.



Appendix 12: Darul Arqam's business premises, located at Kota Damansara, Kuala Lumpur.



Appendix 13: Darul Arqam's mini market located at Kota Damansara, Kuala Lumpur.



Appendix 14: Darul Arqam's community, located at Kg. Sungai Penchala, Kuala Lumpur.



Appendix 15: A rest time for Muslim children after attending the religion class.



Appendix 16: Darul Arqam's Products Exhibition, located at Sungai Petani, Kedah.



Appendix 17: Darul Arqam's *halal* (lawful) products.





Appendix 18: My interviewees, members of Obedient Wives Club.





