THE EMBEDMENT OF ISLAMIC CULTURES: AN ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL PRACTICES IN MALAYSIA

WAN NORSHIRA BINTI WAN MOHD GHAZALI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Nottingham Trent University for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

October 2016

ABSTRACT

This research examines the entrenchment of Islamic cultures in Malaysia's political system and society. The study contends that the state is involved directly in the composition of cultures through its power structure. The study begins with an initial question of 'how Islamic ideology has been embedded in the socio-political context'. As Islam is not the only practising religion; another question to be explored is 'what interpretation do people give to the construction and practices of Islam'. With the aim to extend the current research treatment of Malaysia's Islamic revivalism and Islamisation project, this study focuses on the cultural implications and experiences of Islam. Since most research deals with the broader role of Islam in Malaysian politics, the cultural implications and experiences of the religion in society has not been specifically or substantively addressed and has led to the peripheral notion of Islam.

This study uses an individual interview approach and focus group discussions on exploring the experiences of the research participants with regard to the phenomenon under investigation. Participants from three categories – government authority, media practitioner, and ordinary people – were approached with the general assumption that they could provide from general to specific information related to the key research questions. An abbreviated version of grounded theory using a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm is adopted to explore the lived experiences of individuals who witness, experience, and involve in the ways in which Islam has been constructed, preserved, contested, or resisted in the society.

Based on the framework built from the grounded theory analysis, the research shows Islam as one of the ideological hegemony that strengthens the state's power in governing Malaysian society. In so doing, the state assembles many important institutions and mobilises them as its cultural producers to shape the understanding and practice of Islam at the political level. The study also reveals, when religious consciousness has increased, the Islamisation projects are no longer a mere political rivalry and state's manipulation of power but more towards fulfilling the community's need for stronger Islam. From Gramscian notion, the state promotes values that are in congruence with the people's interest to retain its hegemony. This has moulded the culture and lifestyle of the Muslim in Malaysia through the visibility of Islamic practices as compared to other religions. However, it is learned from the data, some Islamic rules and practices have put ethnic relations into complex situations. The identification of Malay and Islam has led to the portrayal of other ethnic groups as the 'other'. Too much emphasis on Islam (us) has side-lined other religious practices (other). In conclusion, these results negate the view that Islam holds a subservient position as claimed by a few studies. Finally, the research suggests other areas that could be explored using the same framework.

DEDICATION

To my parents, husband, and children

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

uncertainty are meaningful to me. Thank you to Eman, for everything. You have been my buddy during our Ph.D. journey and countless coffee breaks.

Finally, I would also like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Nottingham Malaysian Community members for making me feel at home all the time. May all of you be granted success in your future endeavours. My warm prayers also go to all people who have made prayers for my accomplishment in my Ph.D. journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

GLOSSARY

ABC	Audit Bureau of Circulation
ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement)
AGC	Attorney General's Chambers
ARB	Amanah Raya Berhad
BA	Barisan Alternatif (Alterative Front)
BN	Barisan Nasional (National Front)
BERNAMA	Berita Nasional Malaysia (Malaysian National News Agency)
DAP	Democratic Action Party
GE	General Election
IKIM	Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISA	Internal Security Act
JAIS	Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor (Department of Islamic Religion of Selangor)
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia)
KAFA	*Kelas Pengajian Al-Qur'an* dan *Fardhu Ain* (Quranic and *Fardhu Ain* class)
KeAdilan	Parti Keadilan Nasional (National Justice Party)
MCA	Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malayan Indian Congress
MRM	Multi-Racial Reverted Muslim Organisation
MYR	Malaysian Ringgit
NDP	National Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NSTP	New Straits Times Press
BH	Berita Harian
OSA	Official Secret Act
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (Pan Malaysian Islamic Party)
Perkasa	Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa Malaysia (Organisation which protects the rights of Malay)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

This chapter will introduce Islam as a social phenomenon. The research rationale will be elaborated, followed by research aims and research questions. The chapter will further highlight the scope and limitations of this study and will conclude with the presentation of the structure of this thesis.

The question of 'how Islamic ideology has been embedded in the socio-political context' is significant in understanding the extent to which Islamic cultures have been sown into the politics and society of Malaysia. In studying the multiplicity of the Malaysian context, another question should be considered: 'How people perceive this and what interpretation they give to the construction and the practice of Islam' since it is not the sole religion of the population.

The question about Islamic ideology in Malaysia generally has been addressed through the perspective of Islamic revivalism which has come with some cultural, social, and political implications. One of the implications is the often-neglected question of the 'othering' of the other ethnicities in Malaysian society. Since Malaysia is the Malay-dominated society, this phenomenon, unfortunately has been underestimated. If attempts made to address the 'otherness', the concept has not been brought into much attention which in the end didn't portray the reality.

1.1 Islam as a Social Phenomenon

Islam is practised in several different places, in various ways, by many different people. It is impractical and almost impossible to generate a single coherent concept that provides the all-inclusive meaning and interpretations of Islam across national boundaries. Like any other world's religions such as Christianity, Confucianism, and Hinduism, there is no universal interpretation of Islam. The burgeoning literature on the contestation of the universality of Islam illustrates this fact (e.g.: Amrullayev, 2007; Soroush, 2002; Shamsul 2005b; Umar, 2004; Eickelman, 1981; Hodge, 2005; Norris and Inglehart, 2002; Houben, 2003).

As a form of culture and as a social phenomenon, Islam is an indefinite term. "The actual lived experience of Islam has always been culturally and historically specific and bound by the immediate circumstances of its location in time and space", (Soroush, 2002, p. 16). Islam is interpreted and employed by Islamic world in its own rights. Islam in practice and Islam as a way of life have been influenced by action, behaviour, and attitudes of Muslims in different ways. The ideas, beliefs, and customs in local and foreign contexts work in concert and independently with the pure Islamic ideals to produce Muslim cultural realities (Pasha, 1993).

Shamsul (2005b) recognised Islam is a complex phenomenon through 'Islam embedded'. He called an attention to the process through which Islam came to be embedded in the country. He argued the sociological context and historical circumstances should be critically analysed in scrutinising the intricately embedded character of Islam in the Malay world. Islam should be regarded as time-bound since its

15

practices are very much a product of its cultural surroundings such as historical, economic, political, and social aspects (Amrullayev, 2007). Due to the universality of its values, Islam has the ability to harmonise with the socio-cultural bedrock of indigenous people, hence giving identities to Muslims (Umar, 2004).

This study is interested in the ways in which Islamic cultures are constructed, organised and changed over time and the ways they influence the communal practices of Malaysians. On the premise of the discussion so far, Islamic cultures could be seen as having resulted from the indigenisation of Islam by ethnic, social, and regional groups. The fluid character of Islam paves a way to further explore how people view and interpret Islamic cultures; and how they are adopted as a way of life together with other traditions and religions in a multi-ethnic community.

A glimpse into the history would be a useful starting point to trace how Islam came to be embedded in Malaya. In the pre-independent Malaya, British recruited Chinese and Indian labourers to support its divide and rule policy. As a result, people were racially, socially, and economically segregated. The situation got bitter when Chinese and Indians were given the rights of citizenship which were perceived by the Malays as a threat to their rights as an inland people. As a compensation, Malay and Islam were given preferential treatment through special rights and positions which are enshrined in the social contract (Haque, 2003; Yousif, 2004; Neo, 2006; El-Sheikh, 2010). Hence, as evidenced today, Malaysia consists of a unique blend of history, religions, ethnicities, cultures and politics; with the Malay-Muslim as the dominant group followed by Chinese and Indian along with other ethnic minority groups. Islam has been since designated as the religion of the federation and assigned in the Malay

identity and its roles have been expanded to be included in the public society. Islam also has been integral in Malaysian cultures and has been translated into Islamic revivalism.

The universal phenomenon of Islamic revivalism which begins in the 1970s (Hearman, 2013) brought a wave of religious awareness in Malaysia (Che Soh as cited in Neo, 2006). This phenomenon could explain the ways Islam evolves. Islamic revivalism has been marked by the decline of morality in politics, economics, and social aspects. Islamic revivalism is commonly referred to indicate the spread of Muslims involved in Islamic movements (Nagata, 1980). Rusnak (2012) suggested Islamic revivalism is marked through the "growing religious identification and piety by people of all generations and backgrounds", (p. 21). Despite these general views, Houben (2003) however argued there is no rationalisation that religion was on the decline for it to revive. But he suggested that the growing Islamic awareness becomes "more publicly visible and articulate" as Southeast Asian countries have gone through a process of modernisation (p. 163).

The rise of political Islam has also been brought by the universal phenomenon of Islamic revivalism (Amrullayev, 2007). The resurgence of Islamic pride and awareness has ignited Malay nationalism amongst the Malays in Malaysia which have attempted to push Islamic issues to a central role in the public (Neo, 2006). For instance, under the administration of the former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed, the Malaysian state readjusted its ideology towards greater Islamisation causes and commitment (Hamayotsu, 2002). Hamayotsu (2002) claimed the United Malay National Organisations (UMNO) has been using the 'Muslim-Malay-centric' ideology which is exclusivist *bumiputraism*. The aim of this ideology is to ensure the continuation of the

17

political and cultural supremacy of the Malay Muslims. Although the leading party, UMNO, later on, formed a coalition with the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) to establish the Barisan Nasional (BN, National Front), the politicisation of Islam has continued to dominate the party to maintain status quo. Islam has become a core to the political policies in shaping and managing the Malaysian society.

In the institutionalisation of Islam, BN has been constantly challenged by a political opposition party, *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS) which has mobilised political support based on Islam. PAS previously known as the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), seeks to unite people under Islamic brotherhood to Islamise constitutional administration and to defend Islam's honour for the people (Liow, 2004). Khoo (2012) however argued that PAS politics have been directed towards securing the special position of the Malay Muslims, a sentiment within a Malay nationalism of BN which saw the subordination of other ethnic groups. To contest PAS political Islam, major Islamisation efforts have been carried out regularly by BN to harmonise between Islam, modernisation, and development (Liow, 2004). It is, in fact, challenging for Muslim leaders to accommodate Islamic principles, values, and cultures in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. The discussion here points to the view that Islam has been interwoven in Malaysia due to political rivalry between the two parties.

Islamic revivalism differs from one country to another according to its social, political and economic diversity. It appears from the literature that Islamic revivalism has dominated the political discussions of Malaysia. Islamic symbols have influenced and have been entrenched into many important aspects of Malaysia such as in the

political and societal practices. Yet, to what extent this has been achieved was not substantively and specifically addressed to offer a bigger picture of Malaysian cultures.

Malaysia presents an interesting site for this research. There are several fundamental reasons as to why the questions of Islam and its values made the central focus of the present thesis. First, the government is influential in promoting and imposing Islamic values politically. The state plays a role in the institutionalisation and construction of Islamic values within the society. In this sense, the state involves directly in the composition of cultural practices of the society through its power and dominant structure (Leong, 1989). Thus, it is important to understand and explore the relationship between state and culture in explaining how culture is chosen, manufactured, and developed and with what purpose. By theorising the ways in which Islam has been embraced in Malaysia, interesting and new understanding could be drawn.

Second, in the past several years, Islam has gained an interest in the real world as in the academic sphere among many scholars researching the social phenomenon of the religion. There is greater tendency to adopt the universal homogenisation of Islam particularly with regard to the negative representation after the 9/11 attack (Shamsul, 2005a) which has worked negatively against the religion (Hoover, 2008). By venturing into this research, this study attempts to examine a broader perspective of its dispositions such as history, unique characters, practices, and cultures with the aim to understand the complex and heterogeneous nature of the Muslim community. The understanding of the specific context of Malaysia's plural society could become a yardstick to oppose and dismantle the negative transnational characterisation of Islam.

19

Third, Malaysia is seen as a deeply divided society with several ethnic, religious, and cultural groups (Subramaniam, 2011). Until today, Islam has been infused into and has served as a basis of, Malaysian political and cultural constructions and practices. The imposition of Islam in the state policy has either been well accepted or faced resistance. On this note, one might ponder on the strength of Islam in shaping the cultural practices of Muslims and in influencing non-Muslims and the society as a whole. Knowing Islam is not the only religion, it is important to acknowledge that in the incorporation of Islamic values and ideals, other cultural influences might have been eliminated, immersed or even modified to suit the nature of Islam. Thus, to what extent Islamic cultures have been interwoven in the political and societal fabric of Malaysia should be explored. This further pave a way into looking at other ethnicities through the notion of the 'other' within the Malaysian society.

For how long Islam could continue to dominate the political scenario of Malaysia is yet to be concluded. But, for the policy makers and their respective agencies, shaping the right strategies and measures to maintain its political position constitute a considerable challenge. For various ethnic groups in Malaysia, the reconciliation of ethnic interest in favour of the state's aspirations of Islam would continue to be debated.

1.2   Research Rationale

This work extends knowledge in some areas. There are several important justifications that prompted the decision to embark on this work. The first is a slanted claim in the literature that Islam remains peripheral due to political opportunism despite

major Islamisation effort in Malaysia (e.g.: Miller, 2004; Barr and Govindasamy, 2010; Ufen, 2009; Geertz, 1968 cited in Hefner, 1997). Some scholars appeared to overlook other factors that focus on the dominant role of Islam. The second is the rise of international negative connotation and stereotype of Islam by the western media. This work strives to provide the other side of Islam and to reject the negative universal accounts of cultural practices, meanings, and identities of the religion. The third is that the highly pluralistic society of Malaysia provides an interesting site to explore cultural conflicts and value mixtures with regards to Islam's preferential position. The fourth is a claim that little has been told about the adoption of Islam as cultural practices of the Muslims in Southeast Asia. Attention is, therefore, needed around these issues.

Research on how religious values and sentiments dictate the political wellbeing of Malaysia has been widespread. The symbolic role of Islam has been well documented in the political rivalry between the incumbent party of UMNO and political opposition of PAS. Such explanation has, however, side-lined other societal roles of religion. In other words, there is a tendency to look at the role of religion solely through the lens of politics. There is also a paucity of research that goes deeper in addressing the notion of Islam as peripheral to the broader role of politics. Given the urgency to address the significance of Islamic cultures within larger issues of Malaysia, it is timely to endeavour a new piece of research.

As a social phenomenon, the constructivist grounded theory could be used to elicit fresh understanding on the practical aspects of Islam. Researching people's diverse interpretation about their experiences of Islamic practices would offer views on the diversity and heterogeneity of Islam. Further, a multi-racial country is an interesting

context to study the indefinite ending of cultural conflicts and religious issues. It is worth to explore how the multi-cultural values affect the Islamic practices in someone's lives. Hence, offering data that compares public opinion against the idealistic political ideology of Malaysia.

This research will offer a platform to evaluate the politics of Islam specifically from the view of the Malaysian society. It also attempts to contribute knowledge on the social and political roles of Islam on the rising discussion that Islam is a cultural form and a crucial site of ideological struggle. The significance of this work would present one of the homes of Islam in Southeast Asia. This would address Roff's (1985) concern that "the place and role of the religion and culture of Islam […] in Southeast Asian societies" has been underrated by western observers in the social science field (Roff, 1985, p. 7).

Overall, this research would significantly offer an understanding of what constitute Islamic cultures and how they come to be embraced in the country's political and societal fabrics. The examination would underscore the roles of the state in composing and reproducing the ideological discourse of Islam which highlights its superior position in the continuity of the state's political power.

1.3   Research Aims

The research aims to extend the current research treatment of Malaysia's state Islamisation project and Islamic revivalism, with an emphasis on their cultural implications in Malaysian society. Despite the global focus on Islam as a social

phenomenon, little attention has been given to the cultural side of Islam in scholarly works. If there is any, the main concern is not on the cultural aspects, rather on the religiousness or spirituality. This has seriously marginalised the importance of Islam to the study of Southeast Asian culture. Malaysia is no exception in this regard. Most research deals with the broader role of Islam in Malaysian politics and has not specifically or substantively addressed the cultural implication of Islam in the society. The tendency to see Islam through the lens of politics has led to the notion that Islam is peripheral.

It is the objective of this research to expand the current understanding of the practice and meanings of Islam among ordinary Muslims and non-Muslims by interpreting and elucidating their experiences of its values and ideals. It is also similarly vital to highlight the roles played by the state in embracing religious values and sentiments within politics and society. Therefore, the aims of the study are to:

- Gain insight into the experience of Muslims and non-Muslims on Islamic cultures.

- Explore the ambiguity around the notion of peripheral Islam.

- Develop the indigenised form of Islamic cultures based on local experiences which account for the sociological contexts and historical circumstances in order to provide an alternative to the universal impression of Islamic cultures, meanings, and identities.

- Emphasise the roles of the state in embracing and composing Islamic cultures within politics and society.

1.4   Research Questions

Congruent with grounded theory, the research commences with a preliminary broad area of inquiry. Initially, the research question is 'to what extent have Islamic cultures been embedded in the political and societal sphere of Malaysia?'.

The overarching idea has been to look for participants who engage and involve with and are affected by, the construction of Islamic values and ideals in Malaysia in order to develop a framework for the understanding of Islamic cultures. To achieve this in the complex multiracial and multi-religious society, insights from the government authority in the incorporation of Islam could offer valuable perspectives. Views from media practitioners who are fairly autonomous to shape public opinion and discourse are also searched. This is particularly to explore the major socio-political factors that have shaped and influenced the construction of Islamic practices in the country. It also seeks to trace possible intervening viewpoints behind the entrenchment of Islamic cultures from the public.

On this basis, this study uses a semi-structured interview protocol which includes all questions that have been perceived to contribute to answering the initial research problem. The interviews have accumulated a large volume of uncategorised and undirected experiences of people about Islamic ideals and practices politically and socially. Data analysis has discovered what participants consider to be important. As participant accounts revealed that their striking concern was the superior position given to Islam and Malay, data analysis became more focused. The question seeks to understand more about what people consider to be a prominent aspect of the issue, how

this issue is manifested in the society, what reasons and justifications lead to this issue, and how this issue affects societal practices.

As documented within grounded theory literature, the emerging data analysis has refined the focus of the research, hence the research questions are:

- How are Islamic cultures constructed and manufactured in Malaysian politics?
- How is Islam practiced in the Malaysian society?
- How does Islam influence the culture of the Malaysian society?
- What are the challenges in the superior construction and maintenance of Islam and its cultures in Malaysia?

1.5   Research Scope and Limitation

The scope of this research is to investigate the extent to which Islamic cultures have been interwoven in the political and societal fabric of Malaysia. The focus is on exploring views from three categories of respondents with the general assumption that they could provide from general to specific information related to the key research questions. The first group is government authority which includes persons in a particular authority as either in the office or retired senior government servants. The second category is the key opinion setter who is in the position to shape public opinion in Malaysia. This category consists of media practitioners such as editor, sub-editor, news producer, and journalist. While the third category is the public that comprises students and people who work in public and private sectors.

The locale of this research is the Klang Valley and Putrajaya. This decision is made considering the availability of the first two categories of respondents in the area.

However, to ensure the diversity of opinions, the respondents' background is broadened to include any Malaysian citizen who lives in the Klang Valley regardless of ethnic groups. This criterion is vital to tap into the respondents' social upbringing in relation to the key research questions. Other criteria for the respondents' selection include status and gender.

This research uses grounded theory-lite or abbreviated version of grounded theory. This means grounded theory is not used from the beginning of this study. Rather it is only applied to data analysis after data collection is concluded which also means data is not simultaneously analysed during data collection. Grounded theory is useful in the organisation and categorisation that systematically maps out concepts and categories as expressed by respondents with the aim to generate core themes or categories. Grounded theory, in this sense, refers to the analytical tool in the construction of theoretical explanations grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2008).

A constructivist-interpretivist paradigm is adopted to explore the lived experiences of individuals who witness, experience, and involve in the ways in which Islam has been constructed, preserved, contested, or resisted in the society in order to understand the multi-dimensional Malaysian voices. The adoption of constructivist-interpretivist to inform the grounded theory-lite is relevant and suited to the nature of this inquiry. The constructivist-interpretivist approach has led to the co-constructions of meanings and that there is more than one interpretation of meanings. My understanding of grounded theory as a method and methodology has assisted this study in gathering rich and novel information when experiences and understandings are the focus. In short, given the constructivist-interpretivist underpinning this study, the thesis will attempt to

understand the social phenomenon of Islamic practices and cultures in the broader context of Malaysia.

This research is limited in several ways. Due to time limitation, data is not analysed during data collection as required by the basic grounded theory principles. It is anticipated that conducting data analysis while collecting data would necessitate longer time for fieldwork which was not possible since it was conducted in Malaysia and there was time limit given by my research sponsor.

Secondly, this study is concerned with Islamic policy, *Shari'ah* principles, and Islamic institutions that would contribute to the understanding of the roles of Islam in Malaysia. Extensive details regarding economic and other aspects unrelated to it are purposely avoided due to space concern. However, attempts will be made to incorporate these discussions if deemed relevant.

Thirdly, since most of the respondents are chosen in the Klang Valley area, the results may not be generalisable to the whole population. It is hoped that the research findings will contribute as important indicators in studying Islamic cultures in Malaysia, and in particular for studying the construction, preservation, negotiation and acceptance of Islamic ideology.

1.6   Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises of nine chapters including the Introduction. Chapter 1 briefly provides a general overview of the research to illustrate reasons for carrying out the study. Next, it spells out the research rationale, research aims, and research questions

underpinning this study. Research scope and limitations envisaged to be encountered are also addressed.

Chapter 2 presents a background to the research setting. The chapter details out the political, economic, and social context of Malaysia, including the media structure. It also highlights the status of Islam in the country.

Chapter 3 commences with a brief justification of the use of literature review towards building the theoretical framework of this research. The literature review will be used to fulfil two functions; initial review and focused review that are congruent with grounded theory method. The initial literature is undertaken to provide background on the key themes of this research. The literature review is also to acquaint myself with the work under examination as well as to fulfil the requirements of my doctoral programme; such as providing research context and reviewing method and methodology. The focused literature review occurs at the end of the grounded theory analysis. It focuses on reviewing studies that are related to understanding emerging concepts and categories in data analysis such as the concepts of power, culture, and the state.

Chapter 4 catalogues the methodological structure for this research, including the philosophical assumptions underpinning the study. The chapter offers rationalisations for choosing qualitative research method and an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm in analysing data. It also explores the evolution of grounded theory and its methodology. The constructivist grounded theory as propounded by Kathy Charmaz is overviewed since it shapes the grounded theory of this investigation. The selection of grounded theory-lite or abbreviated grounded theory will also be justified.

Chapter 5 elaborates the methods of data collection procedure, ethical considerations, participant selection, and interviewing techniques. It further explores data analysis procedure using constructivist grounded theory. This will be followed by an explanation on the use of reflexivity. The chapter concludes with the procedures to evaluate the validity and credibility of grounded theory research.

Chapter 6 presents empirical results of grounded theory analysis in reference to a specific categorical framework developed. The first main category explores the embedment of the elements of Islam in the political structure. The key themes range from the spread of Islam in Malaysia, setting the Islamic foundation, and the mobilisation of institutions to promote Islam. The chapter discovers that the state's construction, preservation, and commodification of Islamic values correspond with the cultures of the dominated groups. The chapter deepens understanding on the state hegemony as a source of power by illustrating how government's exercise of intellectual and moral leadership using the principles of Islam has facilitated to maintain its political hegemony.

Chapter 7 extends the understanding of Islamic cultures through the realm of everyday conducts. This chapter examines two important levels of Islamic cultures; communal level and individual level. At the collective level, major Islamic symbols are highlighted to exemplify how Islamic values and norms have influenced the Malaysian society. At the individual level, the chapter explores faith or belief system as the foundation of religious practices. Several Islamic rituals such as prayers, covering *aurah*, and the observance of *halal* and *haram* matters have been discussed. Respondents revealed how the declaration of belief and the outward expression of

religion provide a strong symbolic sign in illustrating Islamic cultures as the widely-practiced norms.

Chapter 8 reveals the challenges confronted in putting Islam, Malay, and their cultures in a superior position. The chapter deals with the alternative views or public contestation of the preferential status of Islam and Malay. The chapter explores aspects of politics and ethnic arrangement, education and language, economic and business, religious issues, cultural practices, and contestation through civil society. In short, the chapter exposes the contestation, resistance, or negotiation of other ethnic groups on Islamic values, policies, and cultures.

Chapter 9 draws together discussions from findings presented in Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8. Attempts are made to illustrate the study objectives have been achieved. Evaluation of using the abbreviated version of constructivist grounded theory is also presented. The chapter further summarises contributions of this project and directions for future investigation.

CHAPTER 2: SETTING THE CONTEXT – THE BACKGROUND OF MALAYSIA

2.0   Introduction

Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the post-colonial Malaysia followed by the politics of ethnicity and inter-ethnic relationship in Malaysia from after independence up to this day. The section also discusses the current economic and political situation in Malaysia. It then focuses on the institutionalisation of Islam and the role of media and journalistic practices in the country.

The Federal Constitution of Malaysia, formerly known as the Federation of Malaya (Persekutuan Tanah Melayu) came into being in 1957. Later, in 1963, Malaya, Singapore and the two Borneo regions of Sabah and Sarawak merged together as an entity (Ahmad Fauzi, 1999; Barr and Govindasamy, 2010). However, Singapore has been ousted from the Federation in 1965 and formed as an independent country (Ahmad Fauzi, 1999).

Malaysia is based on a Constitutional Elective Monarchy system in which the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (YdPA) is appointed from among the nine Malay rulers as the supreme head of the Federation (Tamir, 2013). The appointment of the YdPA is made once for a single five-year term. His roles are largely ceremonial which includes custody of executive power, Malay rights, and religion of Islam (Faridah, 2009). However, the exercise of executive powers rests in the hand of the Prime Minister who is officially appointed by the YdPA as the head of the state of Malaysia.

Malaysia is made up of 13 states and three federal territories in Peninsula and Borneo. The societal plurality composition in Malaysia is seen as a unique character which comprises of diverse ethnics, cultures, tribes, and religions. The country is populated by approximately 30,300,000 people which composed of 50.3 percent Malay, 21.8 percent Chinese, 6.5 percent Indian, and 11.0 of other *bumiputra* while the remaining 8.7 percent comprise of non-Malaysian citizens.[1] Malaysians are free to profess and practice their beliefs. Most Malays and *Bumiputera* are Muslim, Chinese and Indian are either Buddhist, Hindu, or Christian, while some other ethnic minority faiths include Sikhism, Taoist, Confucianism, Bahaism, and Paganism. As stated in the 1957 Federal Constitution of Independence of Malaya, Islam is the official religion of federation and Bahasa Melayu is an official language of the country (Ezhar, 2009).

Malaysia based its parliamentary system on Westminster, a legacy of British colonial. The Malaysian constitution provides a firm foundation in the areas of politic, social, management, economy, and legal constitutions which is divided into a parliamentary (legislature and executive) and an independent judiciary. The country also exercises a democratic system in which it has been regarded as semi-democratic (Heufers, 2002) because of its somewhat authoritarian rule in a participatory political system (Turnbull, 1980; Ufen, 2009) especially during Mahathir's reign, the former and fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia (Salazar, 2007).

2.1 Post-Colonial Malaysia

Following independence, a coalition called an Alliance of *Barisan Nasional* (National Front, BN) consisted of an ethnically based political parties set up a

government in Malaya (Turnbull, 1980; Salazar, 2007). The Alliance comprised of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). The willingness to form a coalition which embraced major races was realised to meet the condition made by British colonial government to gain independence (Turnbull, 1980; Salazar, 2007). Until today, Malaysia has been led by BN, in which UMNO, a Malay ethnic based political party, remains as the leader component party over the others.

During this time, the government followed the general guide in ruling the country called the "bargain" of 1957, a compromise between races (Ahmad Fauzi, 1999). The bargain ensured Malays to get an acknowledgment of their political superiority and special rights as indigenous people; while the non-Malays would continue to benefit from *laissez fair* economy and free to exercise their culture and traditions (Ahmad Fauzi, 1999; Salazar, 2007).

The British colonial legacy left two lasting impacts in Malaysia, namely, the country's constitution which was drafted in 1957 and the multi-ethnic society (Sriskandarajah, 2005; Salazar, 2007). The constitution is the most significant aspect as it provides the institutional basis for the Malaysian government to run its administration after independence. This can be observed in the adoption of the parliamentary system and the Kingship office from the British model and remains fundamentally in force until today.

The multi-racial society in Malaysia is rooted from the British policy of importing Chinese and Indian labours to work in tin mines and rubber plantations.

Malays indigenous remained as traditional peasants and fishermen. The division of work by ethnicity since pre-independence led to the domination of Chinese and Indian in mining, plantation, and urban areas. The major consequence of the British policy was the economic inequity between ethnicities in the country during the early post-war years; which is still an issue even after 50 years of independence (Sriskandarajah, 2005). As evident, Malays were mostly found in the rural economy, while some were in government services, whereas, non-Malays were stationed in large-scale commercial and business, professional, and working class sectors (Crouch, 1996; Ahmad Fauzi, 1999). The British also went to the extent of granting the rights of citizenship to Chinese and Indian in its effort to reduce the *Sultanate*'s power (Miller, 2004). This led to the strong feelings of nationalism among the Malays and the politicisation of issues related to Islam to secure their special rights as the 'son of the soil' or *Bumiputra* in Malaya.

Many efforts that were taken to eradicate poverty among Malays especially in rural areas seemed fruitless. The western capitalist economic relationship of pre-independence remained in force which gave a little advantage to Malays (Ahmad Fauzi, 1999). The Chinese continued to dominate the domestic trade, retail, and property and benefited from the export profit (Salazar, 2007). The situation left the Malays underprivileged and remained in low-productivity agricultural.

The imbalance in economic distribution and the failure of the "bargain" burst into a racial riot in Kuala Lumpur on 13 May 1969. 196 people were killed. Most of them were Chinese and their shops and houses were burned out (Ufen, 2009). This resulted to the proclamation of emergency state in the country and suspension of parliament and constitution. The mishap is not only seen as caused by economic

disparity but rather as ethnic and cultural cleavages. Sriskandarajah (2005) claimed ethnic accommodation can be frail particularly over resources distribution in the intense interracial competition. When the distribution of wealth was unfair, ill feelings between different racial groups could arise.

2.2 The Politics of Ethnicity and Inter-Ethnic Relations

The heterogeneous nature of society in Malaysia offers an interesting landscape for observing inter-ethnic contact and for understanding the whole picture of its economic, cultural, and political systems. Pursuing national unity has been an important manifesto of the state since independence as a way to achieve stability politically and economically. Despite economic and political development enjoyed, maintaining positive inter-ethnic relations has been a real challenge in Malaysia. Generally, the inter-ethnic disintegration could be seen worsening after the introduction of British policy which has divided the economy based on ethnicities and continued in different shapes through the implementation of a New Economic Policy (NEP).

This can be observed following the 1969 riots. In the interest to restructure society, Malaysia stepped from an open capitalist to a more state-controlled and state-involved economy (Turnbull, 1980), with the enunciation of the NEP. The NEP was planned to eradicate poverty among all Malaysians and redistribute employment, wealth, business ownership and control among ethnicities (Salazar, 2007). Within 20 years, the NEP aimed that the Malays, other ethnicities, and foreigners would own 30%, 40%, and 30% of equity capital respectively (Turnbull, 1980).

While the NEP considerably decreased the economic gap among ethnicity, it has been argued that the Malays still lag behind their Chinese counterparts in the economic domain (Sriskandarajah, 2005; Ezhar, 2009). The Malays have far lower income and wealth than the Chinese minority even though they were politically overriding (Snodgrass, 1995). This has driven the use of political power to expand and secure the Malays' economic position. Consequently, The NEP has been accused to have been formulated to the advantage of the Malays' economic condition in comparison to other racial groups (Salazar, 2007; Ahmad Fauzi, 1999; Barr and Govindasamy, 2010; Liow and Afif, 2010). This is evident until today where the Malays are favoured over others through quota systems such as the employment opportunity in a government sector, reservations of licenses and contracts, scholarships, and entrance privileged to local tertiary education. The quota schemes have been criticised to be unpractical and discriminative.

As a result, the Malays' economy has been greatly improved but benefited only a small number of them. This has exacerbated racial tensions. The emergence of Malay business class has been criticised by many because it was created from preferential policies, bias, favouritism, and corruption rather than fair competition and initiative (Ahmad Fauzi, 1999; Salazar, 2007) which hindered fair developments among ethnicities. Sriskandarajah (2005) claimed that the poverty that still lingers among the non-Malays leads to the increase of social problems (for example crime and vagrants) and lower academic performance, especially among the Indian ethnic minority. It has been addressed by Snodgrass (1995) that the implementation of NEP has intervened the stability between ethnic economic balance and national unity. This point is true to some

extent because the NEP still has not succeeded to correctly manage the fair distribution of economy among different racial groups.

The tension of inter-ethnic relations is further found in the racial clash of Kampung Medan which occurred in March 2001. The racial conflict which mainly involved the Malay and Indian was largely contributed by misunderstanding and dissatisfaction over inequality of treatment. After all initiatives made and cautions taken to maintain stability (Ezhar, 2009), this event proved that tension still exists in inter-ethnic relations (Sriskandarajah, 2005) and remains unsettled (Mauzy, 2006).

With no proper communication and mutual understanding, the same eruption is more likely to crop up in future. Political shortcomings in approaching the issue also contribute to this. For example, to hinder ethnic and political dissatisfaction from being spread to the public, the government has been deplored for using political pressure and repressive acts (Heufers, 2002) which are authoritative in nature. Without furthering any efforts to solve the problem from its root, the actual cause of ethnic problems and national disintegration were left unattended. Therefore, the idea that multi-cultural politics should work to protect national unity as suggested by Hashim (1983, cited in Heufers, 2002) seemed ineffectual in maintaining ethnic integration in Malaysia.

Malaysia has been criticised for taking ethnicities as a game for political advantage. Mauzy (2006) claimed in order to gain support during the 1999 election, the government intimidated the non-Malays with the possibility of ethnic violence while at the same time promised to end the ethnic inequality soon. In the same way after the election, Malays were threatened that their special privileges will be taken away by the

37

non-Malays in urging them to unite. Mauzy criticised that Malaysian vision 2020 may be far from reach if the political ruling keeps on manipulating and igniting ethnic fear. Crouch (1996) censured Malaysian ruling power for resorting to authoritarian means in resolving conflicts which can be characterised as repressive and undemocratic. This could be observed through the seeming attempt of ethnic separation, the maintenance of Malay dominance, and the coercive exercise of political system (Ramasamy, 2004).

The post 1969 further marked the manifestation of national ideology called *Rukunegara* which appealed across ethnicities. With the fundamental aspiration to preserve social order and create a stronger government system, this ideology was vigorously propagated by the Malaysian state (Abdul Muati and Saiful Nujaimi, 2009). Ahmad Fauzi (1999) asserted, the cleavage in the society is mainly contributed by racial plurality instead of social class. Issues that are fragile like race and religion should be handled properly since it is capable to shake stability and create dispute in society (Abdul Muati, 2010). For this reason, the national ideology could be regarded as a minimum basis for governing the moral behaviour among ethnicities to maintain social agreement and harmony in the society.

In so doing, many efforts have been done to embed the national ideology in the mind of the Malaysians. For example, the media has been used as a channel to promote awareness on the basic meaning of this ideology through locally produced programmes. The government imposes restrictions on the international contents so that they would not be inconsistent with the aspirations of *Rukunegara* (Hock, 1991 as cited in Abdul Muati et al., 2009).

Education is seen as another means to maintain ethnic relations. Education has been approached for nation building and national unity (Turnbull, 1980). Education is believed to cultivate cultural and religious reverence for a harmonious society and build constructive relationship through contact and interaction (Ezhar, 2009). In this sense, ethnic restriction in education was also reduced. For example, the decrease of quota reserved for *Bumiputera* in public universities (Azirah, 2009) has given more opportunity to non-Malays. This has created awareness among the younger generations on the importance of maintaining ethnic understanding and opened up for a positive competitive environment.

However, contestation over language use could be argued as restricting the function of education towards better inter-ethnic relations (Mauzy, 2006). For example, the government still allows the continuation of Mandarin and Tamil medium schools besides having national schools which use *Bahasa Melayu* as a medium of teaching. This has given little help in integrating different ethnic groups since students of different ethnicities will miss the early socialisation process.

In 1991, the government introduced the National Development Policy (NDP) which intended to accommodate the non-Malays without neglecting the Malay interests (Milne and Mauzy, 1999, cited in Mauzy, 2006). The NDP facilitated to moderate ethnic tensions and is perceived less controversial as compared to the NEP. However, Mauzy (2006) claimed that the NDP did not laid out clearly specific target or time frame; which signified the uncertainty of its effectiveness to curb any ethnic conflicts from repeating. Overall, it appears inequity in wealth distribution and unfair treatment have been the main reasons for ethnic unrests. The Chinese is still far ahead monopolising business

sectors while the Malays remain in most governmental sectors. As for the Indian, competition continues to be stiff in wealth accumulation.

2.3 General Overview of Malaysia's Economic Development and Politics

For the purpose of national development and modernisation, Malaysia has come out with various economic plans and policies. The country has performed outstandingly in economy after post 1969 event. As a racially heterogeneous country, Malaysia was considered as the ten fastest growing economy in the world from 1970 to 1990 (Snodgrass, 1995). For example, the country has shown exceptional developments in agricultural and industrialisation sectors.

Since 1970s, Malaysia has been producing raw materials such as tin, rubber, and palm oil for foreign exchange revenues. Malaysia has been blessed with profitable natural resources such as oil and gas production (Salazar, 2007; Turnbull, 1980) that has turned into one of the country's earnings. Petronas is one example of the largest oil and gas company which has contributed heavily to the economic growth and fully owned by the government. The margin profits obtained from oil and gas provided opportunities for the government to embark on heavy industrial programme, namely the Malaysian car project known as Proton (Crouch, 1996).

However, due to financial slowdown and drop in oil prices, government was forced to cut back the heavy industrialisation project (Crouch, 1996). In July 1997, Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries were badly hit by regional financial crisis. During the crisis, the economy contracted by 7.4 percent, while the Malaysian Ringgit

40

(MYR) plummeted from an average of 2.42 per US Dollar in April 1997 to as low as MYR 4.88 per USD in 1998 (Mohamed and Syarisa, 1999). The economic turmoil affected the real sector (such as the export of oil, gas, rubber, and palm oil) that evidenced in the winding up of businesses, curbing employment growth, and increasing inflation levels. Some argued that the Malaysian government denied the existence (Mohamed et al., 1999) and the seriousness of the economic crisis in the early stage of its occurrence (Kim, 2001). To shift public's attention from the economic situation, the media played the issue of the sacking of the then Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim (Kim, 2001).

After two years of undergoing the economic downturn, Malaysia improved strongly with an average of 5.9 percent annual growth recorded in 2001.[2] Among the key boosters of this growth were contributed by service and export sectors. Mohamed and Syarisa (1999) classified the economic recovery process was homegrown through tight fiscal and monetary policies as well as expansionary policies. Unlike its neighbouring countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and the Republic of Korea which decided to receive financial aids from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Malaysia survived on its own.

After recovering, Malaysia moved one step further from agricultural earnings to exporting electronic and electrical products. It is reported in the Economic Analytical Unit (2005) that a strong demand from East Asian on electronic and electrical products contributed the largest income of Malaysia's export; which supplied 69 percent of annual economic growth (Crouch, 1996). Malaysia became the fifth largest semi-conductor exporter in the world by the year 2002 (Economic Analytical Unit, 2005).

The rapid increased was also seen in the exports of textiles which contributed 26 percent of economic growth annually (Crouch, 1996). This aroused more foreign investors to Malaysia which generated foreign exchange (Economic Analytical Unit, 2005). In general, export-oriented industries have fostered rapid fiscal escalation in the country.

In conjunction with the growth of the economy, social progress is another important area that mirrors the degree of development in Malaysia (Aun, 2004). Rural areas have been taken care of through the improvement of access to education and access to fundamental services such as water, electricity, roads, and other public facilities. Access to education has become easier through transportations provided and schools built near to living areas. At the same time, more teaching equipment has been supplied and experienced teachers have been assigned in rural schools to provide better education. Subsequently, Malaysia witnessed significant increase in the literacy rates.

Although it is reported by Economic Analytical Unit (2005) that the economic boom has dramatically facilitated in reducing poverty and promised employability among the public; the World Bank highlighted poverty still lingers and income disparity remains high in relation to the developed countries.[3] Aun (2004) added even though poverty alleviation is one of the Malaysian economic development agendas, it has not been pursued with high dedication. This could be seen in the low income level of many people. Aun further argued although the government geared towards development, efforts made have been to serve the state's purposes.

For this reason, Aun (2004) classified Malaysia's development policy into two types: economically driven and politically motivated. The former strives for the

enhancement of the economic progress while the latter emphasises on maintaining hegemony while shaping development. The political driven aspect can be observed strikingly during Tun Mahathir's era through his active involvement in promoting development and monitoring the performance of bureaucracy. The outcome of the political active participation allowed the formulation and implementation of policy necessary for industrialisation (Salazar, 2007).

Under Mahathir's plan, privatisation policy was introduced, which Salazar (2007) explained as an attempt "to roll back state involvement in the economy and trim the overblown and inefficient public sector" (p. 63). He maintained that political patronage in terms of vote was a key to gain access to the state-created financial opportunities, particularly those who had close ties with top UMNO politicians. This policy grew denunciation over official corruption as trustees (Ahmad Fauzi, 1999), patronage and cronyism (Mauzy, 2006) and "concentration of private wealth, and the cultivation of private, individualised ties between capital and the state" (Aun, 2004, p. 72); which have benefited only few Malays.

For this reason, Malaysia has been criticised for practising authoritarian approach that is the concentration of power in the Prime Minister's office (Salazar, 2007). Jesudason (1996, cited in Heufers, 2002) similarly highlighted that Malaysia is a "syncretic state" which practises liberal capitalism and involvement of state in economy. These illustrate Malaysia did not practise an absolute democracy. Although, it is suggested by Lipset (1959) that greater democracy is determined by higher levels of wealth, literacy, urbanisation and media proliferation which escort political stability, this is not the case in Malaysia. Because in this country, the political and financial stability

which usually decide on the strength of democracy. The character of nation that will be shaped by collective voice of communities as imagined by Fauziah, Samsudin, Latiffah, Abdul Latif, Mohd Fairul, and Nur Roziyana (2012) is farther reaching. Indeed, Mahathir regarded the use of democracy as difficult and hence the installation of half authoritarian regime to control important institutions should be done (Kim, 2001). This view concurred with Crouch's (1996) assertion that developing nation like Malaysia is more likely to resort to authoritarian means because of the rapid economic growth and industrialisation are too heavy to be handled by democracy.

The authoritarianism as claimed by Crouch (1996) and Kim (2001) could be well observed in politics. For example, the opposition party particularly an alliance *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR, People's Front) which formerly known as *Barisan Alternatif* (BA, Alternative Front) has been hindered from fair competition in politics since BN is in control in almost all resources especially development funding and media. The power of the opposition party is restricted using an unfair treatment in parliament and repressive acts. The common repressive act that works to maintain the ruling party hegemony is the Internal Security Act (ISA) (Heufers, 2002; George, 2007). ISA has been considered repressive since it allows "arrest[ing] without warrant and detention without trial", (George, 2007, p. 894). This act has directly restricted opposition to work against the government.

Established in 2009, PR consisted of *Parti Keadilan* (National Justice Party), *Parti Islam SeMalaysia* (PAS) or Islamic Party of Malaysia, and Chinese Democratic Action Party (DAP) (Lim, 2008). *Parti Keadilan* was formed following the sacking of ex-Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim in 1998 who was charged with sodomy and

corruption allegations. This party has gained many supporters especially those who infuriated over accusations on Anwar.

The main Islamic opposition party in the coalition of PR is PAS. Basing on the endorsement of Islam as a key political reference, PAS has initiated Islamisation efforts in Malaysia since 1970s. After defeated badly in the 1986 election, PAS marked another milestone in the 1999 election and gained greater support that led to its winning in Terengganu. However, in the 11th GE, PAS lost Terengganu and secured only seven seats in parliament but remained in control of Kelantan with lesser seats. In the 2008 election, PAS regained its power in Kelantan, took control of Kedah and won 23 parliamentary seats. Being exceptionally strong in the state of Kelantan, PAS moved forward merging into a coalition with DAP and PKR in 2009.

The political competition has changed since the 12th GE in 2008 where Malaysia gradually shifted towards a two-party system which saw two parties compete on equal footing (Lee, 2013; Ramasamy, 2004). The 13th GE further confirmed this trend where the ruling party has been challenged formidably (Mohamed Nawab, 2014).

Lim (2008) and Weiss (2008) suggested that the change in the election scenario has been resulted from the rise of people's suppressed discontent towards the current political system and the weakening of social-economic situations such as the increase of cost of living, crime and corruption, and marginalisation of certain ethnic group in Malaysia, especially the Indian. A new media culture is also believed to have contributed to this change. For example, the tendency of the government-controlled print and broadcast media in demoting politicians and campaign events from the

opposition sides were perceived as biased by people (Weiss, 2008). Hence, the new media were turned to. The internet and social media, particularly blogs, Facebook, and YouTube were employed effectively by the opposition parties and supporters to provide alternative information; since more people trust the alternative channels than news from the mainstream media. This aspect will be elaborated further in the last section of this chapter which emphasises on the media in Malaysia.

Recently, the ruling government begins to lose support from Malay Malaysians which opens up an opportunity for the opposition parties to make a step forward in winning the peoples' vote in the next GE. Although it was predicted that the authoritarian measure will no longer effective in the wake of Malaysians who want a better system in the government democracy, the 13th GE proved it otherwise. A claim made by Caballero-Anthony (2005) that Malaysian political system is on its way to embrace fully democratic systems seems obscure.

While the 12th GE culture signalled an interesting shift in the political landscape of Malaysia, the result of the recent Malaysian GE showed that Malaysian politic is still ambiguous. The 13th GE which took place in the 5th May 2013 saw BN resumed its power despite seeming stronger public support towards the opposition coalition. Due to this, many have shown their dissatisfactions towards the voting outcome and blamed the ruling government for unfair election; since the opposition failed to defeat the world's longest-serving government in history (Grudgings and Al-Zaquan, 2013). The government was accused of playing tricks by causing blackout during vote counting and not using indelible ink for voters who had voted.[4] The ruling party was also claimed to

have distributed identity card to non-Malaysian to allow them to vote. These accusations was denied by the ruling party and claimed as unfounded.

Although government succeeded in mobilising support from other ethnic groups to win the 1999 GE following the Malays' outrage over Anwar's prosecution (Mauzy, 2006), this is no longer effective in the 13th GE. BN seems to have lost support from the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups since the 2008 election and still fails to woo support from them (Grudgings and Al-Zaquan, 2013). Grudgings and Al-Zaquan (2013) also reported that many Malays has started to reject the BN coalition due to corrupted practices and ethnic inequality. People have questioned as to how the ruling party could still have won the election despite these issues. Critics argued that the BN control over media, key institutions, and electoral commission are the main contributing factors.[5]

Weiss (2008), however, predicted the opposition's defeat has been due to unfulfilled manifesto. Another reason that led to opposition's failure to overthrow BN ruling party may be because of how impactful BN's manifesto is. The manifesto highlighted by PR may be appealing to people living in urban areas as compared to those living in rural areas. For instance, PR highlighted price fuel, utilities, transportation and abolishment of monopoly whereas the incumbent BN emphasised on extending financial aid and subsidising policy on essential goods (Lee, 2013). Although PR is still in control over Selangor, they failed to gain support from voters in rural areas because they are not greatly affected by their manifesto. For example, since rural areas do not have tolls, fuel issue may not be important for them. Rather essential goods in the form of food subsidies as offered by the ruling government is much needed.

47

In sum, from 222 parliamentary seats contested in the 13th GE, BN won 133 seats while PAS, PKR, and DAP secured 89 seats which shows that the oppositions parties continue to challenge the ruling party since the last GE of 2008 (Khoo, 2013). Whereas, BN won 275, PAS, DAP and PKR took over 85, 95, and 49 state seats respectively from the 505 seats contested.[6] The result once again affirmed that BN retained its 57-year hold on power that buried opposition reform mission to end the ruling party's corruption and authoritarianism, so far.[7]

2.4 Islam and Islamisation Programme in Malaysia

In Malaysia, Islam has served in many important areas in politics over the years (Houben, 2003). Islam manifests itself as an important component in Malaysian history before and after independence. During the early days of the inception of Malaya, Islam was intended to secure the special privileges of the Malay Muslims as well as to preserve racial harmony. The development of Islam as a political element through the incorporation of religion in the political sphere (Houben, 2003), state and civil society (Ufen, 2009) known as Islamisation.

Islamisation refers to a planned politicisation initiative by the state government in an attempt to mobilise political support from the public. This involves the Islamisation of society through laws (Houben, 2003) which has been largely in the hand of political parties such as PAS and UMNO (Ufen, 2009). A clear imprint made by Islam in this country could be found in the mobilisation of political supports based on religion by PAS. After made its own way out of UMNO, PAS aimed to achieve a union of Islamic brotherhood, to fuse religion in constitutional administration, and to defend

Islam's honour for the *ummah* (people) (Liow, 2004). However, Liow (2004) asserted Islamic prospects by PAS were merely making an access into the political discourse and to criticise the ruling government action. Khoo (2012) also claimed PAS has centred on the issue of Malay nationalism, which was meant to secure the special positions of the Malay Muslims without giving much attention to non-Muslims in the country.

Due to this, PAS politicisation of Islam has been unsuccessful in inducing support from all ethnicities because of its seeming parochialism. PAS was described as parochial because its' objectives seem to have threaten the interest of the non-Muslims and other racial groups which focus more on Islam and Malay. In fact, this issue was frequently and still being played up by the ruling party to divert non-Muslim from supporting PAS. As Liow (2004) asserted, Islamisation agenda advocated by PAS was contagious in the Malaysian political terrain because its restriction in catering the interest of all ethnicities. Houben (2003) also pointed out people's rejection of PAS was due to its reference to Iranian revolution that saw the rise of the "Shiite Ayatollah's" belief which deviated from the Shafi'e school of Sunni Islam followed by Muslims believers in this country (p. 9).[8] The government also viewed this as a threat to Muslims faith and unity in Malaysia.

To differ from the approach made by PAS, UMNO had prompted for moderate, progressive, and systematic expressions of Islam in its politics (Liow, 2004; Ufen, 2009) which reduce and finally eliminate the conflict between religion and ethnic elements in Malaysian community. Although the religious mobilisation in politics could be regarded as a kind of competition between PAS and UMNO (Ufen, 2009), Malaysia has been perceived as an example of being able to sustain religious tolerance within multi-ethnic

and multi-religious atmospheres (Yousif, 1998, cited in Heufers, 2002). Different ethnic groups have been given rights to practice their religion though not in absolute sense.

The country's political Islam exhibited exceptional development records, particularly during Mahathir's era. The Islamisation effort at this time was undertaken more systematically and institutionally by the state through the assimilation of Islamic values (Khoo, 2012). Initially, Islamic values have been used by the government to counteract the social repercussions brought by modernisation and economic development in Malaysian society (Heufers, 2002). Major Islamisation efforts have been carried out regularly to bring together Islam, modernisation, and development in harmony (Liow, 2004). The government has also incorporated Islamic plans that are safe to the Malaysian pluralistic character. The mass media has been used to assist the state to systematically lead Islamisation programmes (Miller, 2004).

There are several criticisms over the institutionalisation of Islam in Malaysia. Although the modernist Islam endorsed by the state has been doing well, it has garnered some disagreement, in particular from the PAS and in several occasions from the non-Malay political parties within BN. Their disagreement was however defeated and silenced through the authoritarian rule of BN, which illustrated the impotence of other ethnic members in the ruling government (Barr et al., 2010). Consequently, the Malaysian government has been criticised for using Islamisation policies to affirm the hegemony of Muslim nation in the country (Mauzy, 2006; Ufen, 2009; Barr et al., 2010). For example, the expansion of *Shari'ah* court's jurisdiction and legal power has restricted the civil courts' jurisdiction on matters within the *Shari'ah* court (Barr et al., 2010). At a certain point, Islamisation policies are perceived only to guard special

privileges of Malay Muslim which eventually has widened a gap between Malays and other ethnic minorities (Ufen, 2009).

The modern and moderate Islam (Barr et al., 2010) propagated by the state has been criticised further because it has nurtured lifestyles which are unacceptable from the Islamic principles among some Malay Muslims (Heufers, 2002; Noor Hazarina, Murphy, and Nazlida, 2007). Muslims in Malaysia are not lawfully banned from entering public social places such as pubs, nightclubs, and concerts. Although gambling is prohibited in Islam, gambling centres continue to operation. As Islam should be a way of life (Martinez, 2001) PAS raised these matters as not being compatible with Islamic principles. PAS went to the point of introducing stricter Islamic resolutions in the form of blueprints for an Islamic state (Whiting, 2010) as a sign of disputing the 'un-Islamic' conducts approved by the ruling government.

The opposition parties have also labelled the government as a secular party due to its un-Islamic, corrupted, and westernised ways (Ufen, 2009). While the party promotes Islam as guiding towards a decent life, bribery and misuse of powers are at large. Islamisation is seen on the surface and merely works to undermine PAS Islamisation effort. For example, the widespread news of BN corrupted practices has been backlashed for pretentious Islamic political culture (Martinez, 2001).

Indeed, the duel between PAS and UMNO is a never-ending issue. UMNO's Islamisation effort has been perceived by PAS as artificial, "long on symbolism but short on substances" (Syed Ahmad Hussein, 2002, p. 94, cited in Miller, 2004). Both parties have constantly demoted one another by exhibiting their Islamic projects are

more authentic (Ufen, 2009; Liow, 2004). In some extreme cases, the contest between PAS and UMNO has caused several Muslims to favour or reject certain *Imam* (a leader in a congregational prayer) during Friday prayer based on their political party (Martinez, 2001). UMNO and PAS have, thus, failed to present exemplary conducts for the people to follow when in fact it is the task of leaders in Islam to set good examples for their followers.

BN further responded to PAS by declaring Malaysia as an Islamic state in 2001. This has raised many concerns, rebuttals, as well as approvals among many people from all ethnicities. BN ruling coalition was once again backfired for not having a strong ground of what constitutes an Islamic state. The opposition parties continue to label the ruling government to be westernised, un-Islamic, and deceitful. Hwang (2009) viewed PAS's pressure has resulted in the increase of government's commitment to deliver based on Islamic causes. On a positive note, the government is regularly scrutinising its flaws to better serve the community.

However, this did not make the BN ruling coalition become more acceptable as a ruling party. It is quoted from Tan Sri Musa Hitam (Deputy Prime Minister from 1981-1986) in Martinez's (2001) study that by responding to PAS, "UMNO is not meeting the expectation of the people" and "every Malay who joins the Islamic party can be attributed to disillusionment with UMNO" (p. 481). Martinez found the perceived widespread of the unacceptable conduct of BN leaders as opposed to moderate PAS leaders' lifestyles have affected voters voting choices in previous elections.

Knowing the recently less popular BN coalition, PAS resorted to merging into an alliance with PR in 2009; despite BN willingness to reconcile with PAS for Malay interests (Amer Saifude, Mohammad Redzuan, Zulkanain, and Rosmadi, 2011). PAS's ambiguous strategy could be predicted merely to secure power rather than propagating real Islamic environment. Its compliance to moderate Islamic agenda and its association with PKR and DAP which moved in the direction of "rapprochement towards ethnic and religious minorities" (Ufen, 2009, p. 324), was not of PAS interest formerly. Liow (2004) described the Malaysian political climate of Malay is "not so much towards greater Islamisation in politics but towards a broader discontent with the ruling government" (p. 368).

2.5   Media Structure in Malaysia

As a developing country, media are used to achieve economic modernity in Malaysia. "The Malaysian media were, and still are, perceived as vital agents of social change and national development – or "modernisation" as conceptualised by political communication scientists in the United States such as Wilbur Schramm and Daniel Lerner in the 60s" (Mustafa, 2005b, p. 64). The media has been used to inculcate elements of national developments and harmony among citizens as highlighted by the government. As mentioned, the media has benefited the ruling coalition by limiting opposition voices from reaching the public. The bias media treatment has raised public dissents because fair political competitions have purposely been tapered. This section will overview the politics of media in Malaysia since the British colonial era until the present, discovering a twofold method of media control, legislative and ownership.

Malaysia's first newspaper was an English language newspaper; *Government Gazette* later called The Prince of Wales Gazette which started its publication in 1806 in Penang (Zaharom and Mustafa, 1998). This newspaper served as a source of information for British expatriates which generally covered foreign news (Syed Arabi, 1988). Since Malaysia consists of people from different races, several newspapers of different languages were also published to cater to this need. *Jawi Peranakan*, a first Malay language newspaper printed in *jawi* script was launched in 1876. About the same year, *Tangai Sinegan* an Indian newspaper also commenced its publication. Later in 1881, a pioneer Chinese newspaper, the *Lat Pau* was launched (Mohamed Hashim, 2006).

Generally, the early newspapers served different functions. Each vernacular newspaper can be described as ethnocentric in nature because it concentrated on events deemed important to each racial group (Halimahton, Ngu, and Raman, 2006). Malay newspaper focused on cultivating nationalism spirit, covered social and religious issues, and supported for independence, while Chinese and Indian newspapers centred on events in their homelands, China and India (Syed Arabi, 1988). Halimahton and colleagues (2006) summarised the early newspapers into two phases. In the first phase (1806 – 1930s), the newspapers were used "to satisfy the commercial needs of the British and the Europeans", while the second phase (1940s – 1957) "witnessed a shift in the Chinese and Indian newspapers; when both races realised they were going to make Malaya their home" and campaigned to become part of Malaya (pp. 190-191). It can be argued that the newspapers in the early days were diverse in purposes and contents since they have served as a voice for each ethnic group.

54

Besides newspapers, radio and television are other tools for information dissemination. Radio was widely used to build national unity and to keep people informed about the situation of the country such as emergency condition and development strategy (Mehra, 2001 cited in Abdul Muati and Saiful Nujaimi, 2009). Both radio and television during British colonial were used as information machinery controlled by the British government (Syed arabi, 1988).

After independence, the government launched its first state-controlled television in 1963, RTM followed by the free to air commercial channel in 1984, TV3 (Zaharom and Mustafa, 1998). Pursuing the same function as in British era, RTM has been a government tool to communicate the message of independence and unity as well as development and nation building. It is suggested by Abdul Muati and Saiful Nujaimi (2009) broadcast services were previously meant to convey knowledge of Malaysian identity building and to redesign a political culture. While the free to air commercial TV3 offered more entertainment programmes to viewers. TV3 is also under a close government scrutiny through ownership.

Today, there are 14 newspapers circulated in Peninsular Malaysia as stated in the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) report as of June 2012. These include four Malay newspapers, five English newspapers (including two free newspapers), and five Chinese newspapers (including one free newspaper). Besides these mainstream newspapers, there are several alternative newspapers which provide alternative views to readers; they are *Malaysia Kini*, the first online newspaper, *Malaysian Insider* (Ali, Faridah, Mohd Yusof, Normah, and Maizatul Haizan, 2011) *Malaysia today, Harakah,* and *Aliran*.

2.5.1   Media ownership

The press in Malaysia has been controlled through ownership by those who have a close affiliation with the state (Hasmah, 2007; Kenyon and Marjoribanks, 2007; Zaharom and Mustafa, 1998; Wang, 1998; Mohd Azizuddin, 2004; Mustafa, 2005a). It has been observed that the ownership of media has been highly concentrated, that is, owned by the same few actors; such as by BN component parties or by companies associated with the ruling coalition (Mohd Azizuddin, 2004). This phenomenon has been triggered by economic and political force (Ali, Faridah, Mohd Yusof, Normah, and Maizatul Haizan, 2011).

The concentration of ownership can be illustrated in the publication of several local newspapers in English, Malay and Chinese by the same media company, the New Straits Times Press (NSTP) group. Among them are the *New Straits Times* (NST), the *New Sunday Times*, the *Malay Mail,* the *Sunday Mail, Shin Min Daily News*, *Berita Harian* (BH), *Berita Minggu*, and *Harian Metro.* The NSTP group also operates several main television stations (TV3, 8TV, TV9, and NTV7) and radio channels (Hot FM (Malay), Fly FM (English), and One FM (Chinese)). NSTP is owned by the biggest conglomerate, Media Prima Berhad in which the top management have special relations with the ruling party. Meanwhile, *Utusan Melayu* (Malaysia) Berhad, also closely affiliated with the ruling party, owned *Kosmo* and the most influential Malay daily newspapers, *Utusan Malaysia* (UM). Having the government as a major stakeholder in media conglomerates (Kenyon and Marjoribanks, 2007), the media direction and production will be under the direct influence of the political elites.

The concentration of ownership and consolidation also applies to Indian and Chinese press. As for Indian newspapers, *Tamil Nesan* and *Malaysia Nanban* are owned by those closely linked with a component party of BN, the MIC (Mustafa, 2005a). *The Star*, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, *China Press,* and the *STAR Rfm* are controlled by the MCA's investment company namely Huaren Holdings (Mustafa, 2005a). MCA also owned Nanyang Press Holdings, the second largest Chinese Newspaper group (Chang, 2005). It is, hence, suggested that the pattern of ownership implies the degree of involvement of the ruling government in controlling the media establishments in this country.

The ownership of media does not only involve the government-owned media but also the privately-owned. For instance, a weekly magazine, *The Edge*, a biweekly newspaper, *Watan,* and an alternative free tabloid newspaper, *The Sun* (TS) are owned by Berjaya Group which under the control of Mahathir's close friend, Vincent Tan Chee Yioun (Mustafa, 2005a). As alternative voices, these news media tried to cover both sides of opinion by covering opposition parties (Brown, 2005) and promote non-partisan views but the ruling government was unhappy with their attempt (Hilley, 2001) in which *Watan* had its permit revoked (Suaram, 2005). Hence, it would be wrong to contend that media owned by a person who has a close link to political entity guarantees the freedom of speech.

Ownership is found to be an effective way to wield political control. It has been argued, the media freedom in Malaysia has been tightened through this means on the basis to maintain country's multi-racial harmony, economic and political stability, national security, and to avoid media exploitation (Mohd Nor Shahizan, Mat Pauzi,

Hasrul and Normah, 2012; Mohd Azizuddin, 2004). Shriver (2003) claimed that the ownership of media organisations largely stemmed from the provision under the NEP which has facilitated the state's accumulation of wealth. The implementation of the NEP was also responsible for the privatisation of media organisation. Zaharom (1996 cited in George, 2003) argued the practice of discriminative privatisation of media has escorted the political and economic domination among the ruling coalition and its affiliates. Only certain people close to government actors were selected to own shares in a private company and to monopolise media industries.

It can be proposed that the media is a government tool to maintain political and national stability. Zaharom and Mustafa (1998) reported that media in Malaysia, particularly the broadcast media, was initiated through decisions made by government alliance coalition rather than through an Act of Parliament. This involved the planning of media policies that have been applied on both government-owned and private-owned media organisations. Indisputably those policies were meant to assert political influence and power on media for the benefit of the ruling coalition.

According to Kenyon and Marjoribanks (2007), the media ownership and the control over production and content come in tandem. The "control will determine the kind of news coverage and position and perspective taken by the media as well as the space it provides for alternative and dissenting views" (Wang, 2001, p. 83). By narrowly tailored the media policy, the government widens its control to sustain political stability which has resulted in the lack of media diversity (George, 2003). The government rationalises this control as essential to avoid journalists and reporters from controversial

and provocative reporting. Hence, media's rights to criticise the government has been curtailed (Lim, 2007).

Restrictions through acts and legislations are another means of controlling the media. Malaysian press system is viewed as one of the most repressive and authoritative. Mahathir asserted media control is crucial to "ensure economic and political stability and good governance", (Wang, 2001, 69). State intervention through legislation in the media system has become common and unavoidable which has ensured state's maintenance of hegemony. Basically, Malaysian press are controlled by several acts which include among others the Printing and Presses and Publication Act (PPPA), the Official Secret Act (OSA), the Sedition Act, and the Internal Security Act (ISA) that has been listed as repressive media laws (Crouch, 1996; Wang 2001; Mustafa, 2005a; Mohd Azizuddin, 2004; Roslina, Wan Amizah and Ali, 2013). ISA, for example, has been frequently used against political opponents as a reminder to avoid from anything contentious (George, 2007; Heufers, 2002).

Media control has halted the freedom of expression. The theory of authoritarianism could partly describe the condition of the press in this country. Under such system, Mohd Azizuddin (2004) explained that the government policies were advanced by the media while at the same time giving the government full control over contents. Such practices have been criticised for impeding dissenting opinions from being heard thus giving fewer references for the public to decide fairly on certain matters. This has been argued by Wang (1998) that insufficient number of correct media information has prevented rational discussion among citizens. Heufers (2002) also reproached the government for imposing repressive regulations on media practitioners

since they put unnecessary pressure on them. These regulations have hindered journalists from carrying out their duty as a watchdog to the society. The government involvement in media ultimately denied journalists' task from being critical and morally engaged intellectual (George, 2007). In this context, the freedom of information is not always present since it is used as an excuse for the public interest.

On another occasion, it is common for reporters and journalists to get cynical responses and being embarrassed by government officials if they asked critical questions. These responses have in fact taught media practitioners not to be critical in future. It reported in Suaram (2005) that it is unusual for editors to receive phone calls from minister advising to cooperate in reporting controversial issues. George (2003) aptly concluded that the media in Malaysia is controlled "through ideology rather than force, consent rather than coercion" (p. 250), because although threats are present, they are not always noticeable.

2.5.2   Alternative media

Alternative media have become central agents of information among middle age class and young generations due to the restrictive atmosphere within which mainstream media are operating. Preferably, they turn to alternative media, particularly the Internet, to search for alternative news with regards to politics. Therefore, they are more aware of today's political milieu and has involved actively in political debate with less control from the ruling power. Alternative newspapers, magazines as well as alternative online media by non-governmental organisations, opposition political parties, and activists are all contributing to the diversity of views.

Alternative media can be seen as two types, online and offline. In the political context, the online version of alternative media may be referred to as another tool for exchanging information and public discussion with greater freedom, although not absolute, than the mainstream media. The Internet, according to Lim (2007) is the only medium that could still escape from direct governmental control; whereas, the print alternative media are still bound by stipulated rules and regulations. George (2007) stated that alternative online media in Malaysia are free from huge funds, hierarchies, professional skills, and license to operate, thus are employed to democratise participation in media. These might be among various reasons why political opponents and activists have resorted to this means.

Alternative media served to provide news that differs in practices, context, and content of government controlled mainstream media. Previously, alternative media operated by social activists that covered sensitive social issues to contribute towards "antiwar movement, counterculture, environment movement, resurgence of feminism, and other social movements" (Groshek and Ying, 2011, p. 1525). Groshek and Ying (2011) identified that the purpose of alternative media has been further discovered through a more recent research that includes the promotion of struggle, mobilisation, and transformation against the dominant political power in society. This can be referred to as a democratisation of public participation to challenge status quo in the country.

There are several critical alternative media such as *Malaysiakini, the Malaysian Insider, Harakah, Aliran,* and *Malaysia Today* that signalled an effort to challenge government dominant power. George (2007) however claimed that the extent to which these alternative media stray from the standard practice of objectivity differs. For

example, the only independent newspaper which seen as adhering to the journalistic professionalism is *Malaysiakini* which tries to be impartial in its reporting (Gomez and Han, 2010; George, 2007). While other alternative voices like *Harakah* is meant to spread the perspective of Islamic opposition party of PAS. Similar to *Aliran*, it is one of the earliest non-government organisations advocating for the purpose of human rights via its website *Aliran.com* (Gomez and Han, 2010).

It is asserted by Wang (2001) that the launch of *Malaysiakini* shortly before the 1999 GE was prompted by dissatisfaction among reporters and civil rights activists over the bias news treatment in mainstream media. The site opted for an independent and investigative reporting as an initial move towards free press (Wang, 2001; Gomez and Han, 2010; Steele 2009). As compared to other online media such as blogs, *Malaysiakini* is seen as a conventional news source (Steele, 2009; Siti Suriani, 2012) since it operates in a normal newsroom by journalists. *Malaysiakini* also promotes an open discussion among readers from different backgrounds through letter section (Mohd Nizam, Siti Aishah, and Suhaila, 2013) which supports grassroots journalism (Gillmor, 2004).

Malaysiakini marked a beginning of a politically contentious journalism among the public in Malaysia. This form of online participation has been regarded by George (2005) as a "tradition of the radical alternative press [which] challenges dominant ideologies and attempts to democratise public discourse" (p. 904). The function performed by the online news portal is important and should be appreciated for a fair race between the ruling party and opposition alliance before an election.

Another alternative voice significant to Malaysian political scenario is *Harakah*. Slightly different from *Malaysiakini, Harakah* serves as a news bearer of the political opposition party, PAS. Previously, PAS only published a print copy of *Harakah*. Seeing the rise in its circulation, the government posed few restrictions on *Harakah*. Among the restrictions faced by the newspaper includes a limitation in the number of copies printed, publication reduced to two issues per month as opposed to eight issues and sale to party members only (Suaram, 2005).

Due to this, the party broadens its approach through online news portal which provides daily updates and run by trained journalists through a web called *Harakah Daily*. *Harakah* and *Harakah Daily* cover issues pertinent to politics and Islam. Although Islam is one of the main enterprises, Chin (2004) asserted that PAS political endeavour is largely driven by dissatisfaction with the ruling government than Islamisation in politics. For this reason, it has been argued that *Harakah* and *Harakah Daily* are not seen as alternative voices chiefly because they focused on counter-hegemonic content (George, 2007) and they are used to propagate issues that matter to their parent's party. Instead, they are considered as dissenting voices (Siti Suriani, 2012).

Other than referring to political voices, alternative media also includes other newer form of culture which has gained popularity and audience (Groshek and Ying, 2011). Among them are weblogs, Facebook, YouTube, and other sorts of online shared communication tools which are mostly based on user-generated content (UGC) to exchange views and express opinions. Pew Research Journalism Project (2013) reported that nearly half of Facebook and Twitter users get news through their accounts in which

Facebook is the leading. Since middle age group and youth are internet savvy, access to this media serves as a means for political discussion. Participation in alternative media has therefore reinforced the mobilisation of public opinion. Smeltzer (2008a) argued that "online alternative media have more latitude for critical discussion and debate then do their mainstream counterparts" (p.11). This is the case considering the content are contributed, commented, criticised and added by users who happen to dominate and control discussions.

Mustafa (2005a) noted that the detention of Anwar Ibrahim under corruption and sodomy allegations was the stimulus that triggers the booming of alternative media in the country as a mechanism for a political public forum. The new media has been turned to by civil society players during *Reformasi* movement in 1998 to mobilise support to form alternative good governance (Subramaniam, 2011). In addition, the new media has been used as an alternative counter-public tool against biased mainstream media (Radue, 2012) in the form of weblogs and online news portals to transmit information and views that were suppressed from the public particularly on the issue of his dismissal that warrants explanation. Alternative media, therefore, have become the main sources of information that promote awareness on a current political scenario in Malaysia to many people.

Many observers have noted that the impact of the alternative media is mostly evident in the 2008 General Election. The intensity of online political expression is believed to have resulted in the victory of the opposition coalition in controlling five states denying the ruling party's two-third majority in parliament for the first time (Gomez and Rosyidah, 2010; Ali and Mohd Safar, 2011). The impact of alternative

media on young audience has been observed as influential. Ramanathan (2009) claimed that new and alternative media did influence young voters voting decisions. Raja Petra Kamaruddin also reported that many middle-class citizens were motivated by information spread through the Internet to turn out during the March 2008 election (cited by Kauffman, 2008). In particular, the use of the Internet by political opponents to activate greater political participation has partly succeeded. Nevertheless, they still have to find other means to reach the whole masses because people who live in rural areas is less likely to be exposed to the Internet.

Ali and Mohd Safar (2011) stressed out that the government should not take too lightly the potency of the new media in affecting Malaysian political scenario. They quoted the former Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi following the 2008 general election, who admitted their mistake for underestimating the new media power and "lost the Internet war" (p. 19). Newspapers and television are no longer sufficient to draw voters' attention (Kauffman, 2008) because young voters are more interested in engaging with the new public sphere.

Although the participation in alternative media is high among the Internet users, Gomez and Rosyidah (2010) claimed it did not lead to a change in the government. This can be illustrated in the Malaysian 12th and 13th GEs that witnessed the successes of the ruling coalition remaining in power despite growing support has been shown to the new media. To some extent, the Internet is believed to have impacted citizens by informing current political situation, though this is not sufficient to transform Malaysian government. It is, therefore, vital to argue that the alternative media has and will continue to help democratise political discussions in Malaysian. This is a positive

scenario (Rajaratnam, 2009) since online media could now compete with mainstream media in providing a plurality of views to the public.

It is vital to note that the Internet does not free from existing laws that regulating the print and broadcast media despites its appeals through technology and open society. Smeltzer (2008b) reminded that the government powers should not be undermined since they can and sometimes do regulate online activities if stressing needs exist to maintain status quo. The Internet users should still maintain some sort of self-censorship on what they post online. Kenyon and Marjoribanks (2007) contended the freedom of expression does not guarantee complete protection from regulation even though it is offered in the Communication and Multimedia Act 1998. The government has also mentioned about the probability to exercise existing laws on online information (George, 2005). For example, Raja Petra Kamarudin an online blogger was arrested under the provision of ISA and charged with sedition and criminal defamation (Gomez and Han, 2010) for being too critical towards the ruling party in a web called the *Malaysia-today.net*. To some extent, alternative media do help and will carry on democratising political participation among the public. But the existence of pressure from the ruling power to impinge the speech freedom is indeed inescapable under the name of national development and security.

2.6   Conclusion

This chapter discusses the political, economic, and media background of Malaysia to overview the context of this project. This part is very important because it serves as a basis to understand the nature of the state of Malaysia.

Malaysia is one of the fastest growing countries has been characterised as semi-democratic or authoritarian-democratic with authoritarian press controls. After independence from British colonisation, Malaysia actively promoted the spirit of nationalism among citizens, particularly the Malay Muslims. Malaysian political system has been seen as somewhat stable with its key player, BN has been in power for almost 58 years since independence. Despite multi-racial compositions of the population which consisted of Malay, Chinese, and Indian, Malaysia has been witnessed as fairly successful in maintaining national stability.

To remain stable, many have observed that Malaysia has been practising authoritarian control over the media through ownership and legislation. The domination of BN in politics as a one-party system has been acknowledged by many to further curtail the freedom of the press in the country. This situation gives no ways to political opponents, dissenters and alternative voices to make through the mainstream media. Until recently, the arrival of the Internet in the globalisation era has become an alternative medium for political debate and discussions and has been a democratisation tool especially during elections. The public has now been exposed to alternative views that previously been contained by the mainstream media. Active political participation could be expected as citizens become informed on diverse political views.

In an attempt to maintain status quo, the ruling coalition of BN includes the politicisation of Islam in their approach. This is particularly the case when BN and PAS (a main political opponent party which promotes Islam as its core issue) are in a constant battle in emphasising the institutionalisation of Islam in their politics. Much of the discussion has viewed Islamisation projects merely as a political battle. Miller's

(2004) conclusion has been largely motivated by this when he stated that "Islamic symbols and issues do indeed play an important role in Malaysian politics, but they remain subordinate to and linked with, the broader role of politics in a highly pluralistic society" (p. 3). Martinez (2001) further argued that the proclamation of Islamic state did not make people more obedience towards proper Islamic principles, but only make Islam less effective as a religion that governing people's lives. Martinez's claim is, however, contestable because she appears to generalise the issue without considering the public practice of Islam in depth. It is, therefore, suggested that there is a need to explore the significant role of Islam in order to understand the position of the religion in politics and society.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to establish relationships between the concepts of culture, power, and state with Islam as signifying practices in order to situate this research within the field of cultural studies. The reading of Malaysian politics through Gramsci's conceptual framework provides a tentative interpretation on the state's exercise of power with popular consent, the structure of power, relation between the state and subaltern groups.

There are two types of literature reviews undertaken in this research: the initial reading and focused reading. The role of literature review in grounded theory has continued to be debated among scholars. Glasser and Strauss (1967, cited in Heath and Cowley, 2004) recommended that researcher should not enter a fieldwork with a pre-conceived mind. This is to ensure the research process would not be influenced by previous studies especially in data collection and data analysis. Rather, focused reading should only occur when the result is well underway.

I decided to undertake a preliminary literature review to acquaint myself with the work under examination as well as to fulfil the requirements of my doctoral programme; such as providing research context and reviewing method and methodology. In an initial stage of this study, an exact problem is unknown. It is the preliminary literature review that has helped to focus in a specific area of interest (McCallin, 2003). A preliminary literature review is also crucial to gain some knowledge of what has been done so far

and to recognise gaps in knowledge. With boundaries in place, the preliminary literature has facilitated the understanding of significant key concepts in embarking this research.

The focused literature review concentrates on reviewing studies that are related to understanding emerging concepts and categories of the data analysis. The focused literature that is perceived to enlighten, assist, and extend the emerging themes and categories has been used to complement and interweave the empirical data (Hutchinson, 1993, as cited in McCann and Clark, 2003). The focused review also helps to position this study within a field and shed light on its contribution to knowledge (Giles, King, and De Lacey, 2013) to increase the research rigor. I reviewed literature on power and ideology with the aim to understand the complex relationship between culture, power, and the state. This has directed to the theoretical discussions of hegemony in relation to the state's use of power. The understanding of these concepts helps to illuminate, confirm, refute, support, and extend the emerging result.

Reading through Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, this chapter explores the construction and enactment of Islam by the power of the state. The focused literature highlights how Islam came to be constructed as a state ideology and how the state establishes and maintains the hegemonic strategy. On this basis, I argue that Islam has been used to produce a specific set of hegemonic structures within the Malaysian society to gain national-popular support. In the subsequent section, the state-society relations will be explored through Gramsci's notion of civil society to illustrate the possible resistance to state hegemony. The discussion will present how the concept helps to position the present study.

Overall, this chapter seeks to answer the following questions: how the present social orders have come into existence; how practices, norms, institutions, or values begin; and the forces that can transform or change the prevailing order in Malaysia. The conceptualisation of power, ideology, and hegemony could provide answers to these questions which will be presented throughout this chapter.

3.1   Religion as a Cultural Form

As an interdisciplinary field of studies, cultural studies have been drawn from various subject areas namely political science, sociology, history, and anthropology. The interdisciplinary nature of cultural studies observed the convergence of certain concerns and methods which "has enabled us to understand phenomena and relationships that were not accessible through the existing disciplines", (Turner, 2003, p. 9). One of the main concerns in cultural studies is how cultures are constructed, organised, developed, contested, and changed over time. It has been emphasised in cultural studies "that culture must be examined within the social associations and system through which culture is produced and commodified [which] allows the investigation of culture to be closely bound with the study of society, politics, and economics", (Raj, 2014, p. 92).

The presence of religious discourses has raised the analysts' attention in cultural studies to gain a fresh understanding on the issues of how religion becomes part of social and cultural life. Raj (2014) claimed that Stuart Hall contributed to the development of cultural studies "in the way it is today with a mind to interrogate the variety of cultural forms and institutions cutting across disciplinary border", (p. 89).

Religion is a cultural form that expresses the meaning of life and lived out by social groups which is one of the main subjects in this study.

This research contends the understanding of Islam and its experiences as a result of contextual constructions is not to be overlooked. To explore the diverse character of Islamic worlds, the perspective of cultural studies allows the examination of the dynamic interaction between Islamic belief and practices with social, economic, political, and historical factors. The approach permits the understanding of the role of Islam in societies by regarding its belief and practices as a productive phenomenon that is regularly shaped by a particular state of affairs.

3.2   Culture, Power, and the State

Cultural studies contended that power is central to understanding a culture. Before that, it is essential to comprehend the notion of culture. Storey (2010) provided a comprehensive understanding of culture based on Williams conception. The production of culture is ordinary according to Williams because everyone is involved in the meaning-making. However, he reminded that not all people involve equally in this meaning-making process; in which some people may have more power over the other. Williams linked power with cultural construction (meaning-making). He went on to explain that most meanings are not made by everyone and those meanings are generated by dominant groups and dominant institutions to serve their interests. Williams introduced Gramsci's concept of hegemony into his discussion of culture. This helped him to define culture as not only consisted of shared but also contested meanings.

Culture is shared when it is meaningfully recognised and experienced in similar ways. Karl Marx offered an illustration to this notion by stating, "[O]ne man is king only because other men stand in the relation of subjects to him. They, on the contrary, imagine that they are subjects because he is king", (1976, p. 149, cited in Storey, 2010, p. 4). In this view, the king is something constructed culturally, "gives these relations meaning; and makes them signify, and […] by signifying in a particular way, they materially organise practice", (Storey, 2010, p. 4). Outside this relation, the king may not be meaningful. Culture as consisting of contestation and rejection is derived from Gramsci's processes of hegemony which will be elaborated further throughout this chapter.

Based on Williams and Gramsci, Leong (1989) summarised "culture is […] a tussle in which particular ways of life, or representations of those ways of life, are contested and defended, manufactured and resisted, colonised and opposed", (p. 356). Williams explained "what pass off as 'cultural tradition' or the 'significant past' are actually selective tradition" which have gone through a particular screening process over other practices and meanings that are perceived to be in line with the dominant culture (cited in Leong, 1989, p. 356). In order for this to become a culture, it must be shared and recognised as meaningful in similar ways (Storey, 2010). It is equally important for a state to possess prevailing structures of power over others, which is described in terms of dominance and subordination, in order to forge symbols, beliefs and practices into the dominant culture and to mobilise public sentiment into certain actions (Storey, 2010; Leong, 1989).

73

The discussion of power in cultural studies could be located within Marxism. Lukes (1974, cited in Oswell, 2006) claimed power refers to someone's capacity and authority to mobilise others. Antonio Gramsci is one of the prominent thinkers from the Marxist tradition who becomes an important point of reference for the discussion of power and culture. Operating on the terrain of Marxism, his theoretical writing is useful to inform political practice (Hall, 1996). Drawing his conception of power from Machiavelli, Gramsci asserted that the ruling class "must know well how to imitate beasts as well as employing properly human means [in] exercising power" (cited in O'Shannassy, 2008, p. 90). In Gramscian term, power resides in ideology which is exerted by the dominant bourgeois class on the masses (Daldal, 2014). Gramsci uses hegemony to explain the process and structure of power of a state, one of which through the "relations of dominance and subordination", (Storey, 2010, p. 7). In view of this, hegemony should be explored to explain how culture and ideology are constructed and how they come to be accepted as dominant by other groups, such as in conforming to social norms.

The exercise of power could be observed in the Gramscian term of domination and leadership. Gramsci's conception of hegemony and domination was derived from his own historical context and experience during the rise of facism in Italy in the 1920s (1971). According to Gramsci, there exists two types of power in a state which are related to political society and civil society: coercive power (domination) and directive power (hegemony) (Oswell, 2006). This notion is derived from Gramsci's (1971, p. 57) assertion that "the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'. A social group dominates

74

antagonistic groups, which it tends to 'liquidate', or to subjugate perhaps even by armed forces; it leads kindred and allied groups". Which means, any class would be able to rule a society through either domination or/and leadership. He went on to explain "there can, and indeed must, be hegemonic activity even before the rise of power, and that one should not count only on the material force which power gives in order to exercise an effective leadership" (p. 59). Hegemony, thus, works by gaining consensus "of the people over which leadership is sought", (Oswell, 2006, p.45).

Gramsci emphasises on differentiating between domination and leading (hegemony). In which leading is having the hegemonic direction of civil society rather than domination (Oswell, 2006) which involves coercion and force. Gramsci also borrowed the Machiavellian term of half man, half animal to differentiate between consent and force (p. 170). Hegemonic consent is, however, intrinsically indefinite. The consent may be broken due to what Gramsci called "'crisis of authority" (1971, p.275). This occurs when the authority or ruling classes is no longer 'leading' because they lose consensus from the masses. Instead, they are "exercising coercive force alone" and only dominant (p. 276). In this event, the ruling groups may be dominant without being hegemonic (Ali, 2015).

When the consensus is lost, "the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously", (Gramsci, 1971, p. 276). According to Gramsci, ideological hegemony is constructed by finding some values that are perceived agreeable, pleasant, and echo everyday practices (Lears, 1985; O'shannassy, 2008) and are connected with the working-class culture (Bennett 1986, cited in Oswell, 2006) while also "corresponds to the needs of the

75

productive forces for development, and hence to the interest of the ruling class",
(Gramsci, 1971, p. 429). Gramsci suggested people should be engaged at the level of
culture, called national-popular culture (Oswell, 2006) which is defined by Hall as "the
actual, grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any
specific historical society" (1996, p. 439) to construct a popular hegemony. To engage
people culturally, Gramsci argued the state should be "ethical in as much as one of its
most important functions and moral [and] to raise the great mass of the population to a
particular cultural and moral level", (1971, p. 258). This means for the national-popular
culture to become hegemonic, it should be ideological or what Gramsci referred to as
corresponding to "common sense", "spontaneous" or "the uncritical and largely
unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world", (1971, p. 322) and "fulfil
the masses' needs" (Cappuccio, 2012, p.71). The elite ideological discourse should thus
be constructed in relation to national popular culture and should not be in opposition to
common sense.

For Gramsci also, ideological hegemony should be put forward before coercive
domination. Gramsci highlighted that hegemony is characterised as:

> The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the
> general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this
> consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence)
> which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the
> world of production (1971, p. 12).

Villanueva (1993) explicated how consent of power is granted through
Gramsci's assertion:

> Every culture contains particular worldviews, ideologies; some of these are
> common to the cultures within a society and are common to the cultures that

comprise the dominant groups. We accept commonly held worldviews as truths. The dominant does more than accept; it capitalises. We accept the dominant's actions as based on truths; we approve of acts based on truths; we consent (Villanueva, 1993, p. 123).

In this sense, the ideological hegemony is exercised to gain cultural and ideological consent since it comes with the consent of subordination to the dominant group. This relates to what Gramsci explained as spontaneous. It is within this framework that the state "not only justifies and maintains its domination but [also] wins by leadership and authority the active consent of those over whom it rules", (Hall, 1996, p. 429).

The gramscian term of ideology and power was also developed by Althusser in "Ideology and The State's Ideological Apparatuses". Althusser's understanding of the exercise of the state's power through the repressive and ideological state apparatuses corresponds with Gramsci's discussion of the state as political and civil. According to Althusser (2006), repressive state apparatus contains government, police, army, prisons, and courts which share Gramscian political society that focuses on the exercise of coercive force and power over masses. Althusser also recognised the ideological state apparatus which puts forward ideological power as to get consent from the masses.

Although Althusser made this distinction, he, however, argued that repressive state apparatus could not be purely repressive. Similarly, the ideological state apparatus is not purely ideological. "[T]hey also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic", (Althusser, 2006, p. 93). Althusser also accorded, similar to Gramsci, that education and family are the powerful ideological state apparatuses that use ideological power to

77

ensure conformity from the masses (Daldal, 2014). For example, "schools and churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to 'discipline' not only their shepherd, but also their flocks", (Althusser, 2006, p. 93). Other ideological apparatuses of the state emphasised by Althusser include religion and culture. Althusser suggested studying the differentiation in recognising which one is dominant in a certain context.

The premise of this discussion suggested that state's ideological hegemony could be successfully established if it involves what Gramsci called the *organic* ideology (or common sense); organic in the sense it touches "practical, everyday, common sense, and [it] organise[s] human masses and create[s] the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc", (Hall, 1996, p. 431). Since consent is not permanent, the ideological elements which are seen useful for the continuation of hegemony should be reproduced. This could be done through culture's institutions of civil society, such as family, education, church, and the media (Villanueva, 1992). Cox (1983) termed these as political structures since they assist the state "to create in people certain modes of behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order" (p. 164). Though Oswell (2006) reminded that the dominated groups should not be viewed as passive or prone to manipulation by the ruling class. Gramsci particularly discussed the issue in the sphere of civil society which is seen as a key site of struggle with the state.

Through the domain of civil society, the concept of hegemony could be further understood. Gramsci described there are two major superstructural levels which on one hand is "the ensemble of organisms" called the "civil society" or "private" and on the

other is the "political society" or "the state" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). Although civil society is "not outside the domain of the state", it is called private because it is not within state control (Daldal, 2014, p. 157). The division between state-society could explain the level of autonomy exercised by civil society in relation to state which will be explored further in Section 3.4.

In Leong (1989) for instance, the state is involved actively in manufacturing and patterning its national culture through national tourism policy. In his study, Leong contended Singapore exercised both the state power as well as "political, moral, and intellectual leadership" as contended by Gramsci "to forge certain symbols, beliefs and practices" as "a national culture for tourist consumption", (p.372). Here, tourism refers to culture's institution and is influential in strengthening and maintaining state hegemony by regulating "popular culture to conform [to the] dominant culture", (p. 372). Tourism claimed by Leong is a site for cultural manipulation to be marketed for economic and nation-building purposes. Employing the 'multiculturalism' model in its tourism strategy, the state selected the tradition of "some ethnic groups and blur[red] other finer distinctions", (Leong, 1989, p. 373). The emphasis of the state's roles shows the strength of the state's intervention in the culture of the people hence domination.

In another study, Cappuccio (2012) drew his analysis from Gramsci's power and culture which argued "there is a tight link between history of language, cultural apparatus, and society, in so far as it is through language that the dominant group exerts its hegemony on the subaltern classes", (p. 67). Cappuccio (2012) presented how language has been used as a political instrument through the expression of the elite-constructed ideology to exert power. Based on Gramsci, Cappuccio looked at language

as political. He regarded a theatre and its dialect as cultural components and cultural vehicles that would represent the community's worldview. It is argued in this study that a theatre served as a social, political, and cultural means for the institution of domination by bourgeoisie class over proletariat groups (Cappuccio, 2012). However, in contrast to Gramsci, Cappuccio focused on the use of dialect in the theatre as a tool to resist the dominant bourgeois culture by maintaining "its individuality and deepe[ning] its position of contrast to dominant views", (p. 80). Cappuccio further addressed that the "plurilinguism inherent in dialect theatre is an element of internationalisation rather than the marginalisation of Italy, and of any other multicultural country", (p. 80).

Hilley (2001) equally showed how Mahathir developed a consensual form of hegemonic support as opposed to coercive means using the language of post-ethnic nationalism in Malaysia. Hilley contended "as a condition of the rapid economic transition and 'accommodation' of globally ascendant neo-liberal practices in Malaysia in the early 80s, a newly evolved set of state-class relations had begun to unfold, setting in motion social tensions that came to require a more hegemonic form of authority with which to sustain it", (p. 7). Hilley adopted the Gramscian viewpoint and portrayed how national-populist outputs such as media stories, academic dialogues, or political account carry hegemonic purposes within them. The examination illuminates the reproduction of a language of power to maintain state hegemony. Hilley also explored one of the dominant counter-hegemonic projects known as vision Islam by the opposition party of PAS. He illustrated how modernist project by the state acts to mobilise Islamic consciousness in responding to PAS counter-hegemonic project. Hilley (2001) further made an important observation in which Mahathir's hegemony has been largely

challenged since the beginning of Anwar's affair, the then deputy Prime Minister who was sacked for several allegations. However, he acknowledged it is difficult to displace Mahathir's hegemony due to the absence of a strong opposing populist agenda.

Referring to the main discussion of this section, the debates so far have explored the theoretical insight on the relationship among culture, power, and the state. Hegemony could be argued as providing a source of power for the state to forge ideological and cultural beliefs, practices, and symbols. It has been shown how power resides within ideology. Discussion on Gramsci's view has revealed how hegemony is ideologically established in society since power is based on consent to ensure subordination.

The next section will explore how Islam becomes the state's enactment or ideology that produces a specific set of hegemonic structures in order to create a particular kind of society. It also explores events leading up to the construction of the Malay-Muslims hegemonic position. Several examples will be also examined to illustrate how the government maintains its hegemonic position.

3.3   Embracing Islam as the State Ideology

This section explores how Islam came to be embraced in Malaysia. Drawing from the concept of hegemony, the discussion will illustrate why Islam is so pervasive in the practices of people. As one of the cultural forms in a society, religion has been considered as a key site of an ideological struggle. In the context of this research, it could be argued the government attempts to forge Islamic values and ideas as a

dominant ideology since Islam has been perceived to provide a catalyst to strengthen the state's power. Through the notion of hegemony, this section will illustrate how the dominant ideology of Islam has gained popular consent.

Islam is practically conceptualised in various ways largely in any study of the Muslim community (Eickelman, 1981). Due to the complexity of the position of Islamic practices, there is an ambiguity around the political position of Islam in Malaysia. The prevailing Islamic practices in the plural spheres of Malaysia provide an interesting site for a research which could offer current knowledge on the influences of Islam on the Malaysian cultures.

Azim (2011) claimed the world has witnessed the strong public presence of Islam especially its resurgence in the political sphere. Islam has since become a central stage in political debates. Islam has made a strong cultural impact on individual lives in societies where the religion plays a dominant role. Azim (2011) argued that on one hand, Islam is lived as a policy, becomes part of the state, and is being raised in political discourse. On the other hand, Islam makes an indirect impact such as on culturally defined codes that regulate activities.

Islam is one of the world's fastest growing religions; while Southeast Asia is one of the most populous Islamic regions in the world (Houben, 2003). Islam has been practised since the 13th century (Hearman, 2013). Islam and its culture were born through the Arab conquest (Ihsanoglu, 2003) and hence largely based in the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula. The spread of Islam is one of the great cultural experiences in Southeast Asian history. It spread to Southeast Asia through trading and travelled to

the Malay region through Muslim merchants. Scholars were inconclusive as either Arabian, Persian, or Indian traders who first brought Islam to the Malay Peninsula (Shamsul, 2005a). But they agreed that these merchants had established crucial contact with the Malay Peninsula ruling classes and had them reverted to Islam. For this reason, Islam has significantly influenced the cultural practices of the inland people.

In pre-independent Malaya, British recruited Chinese and Indian labourers to support its divide and rule policy. As a result, the people were racially, socially, and economically segregated. This also led to the inferior status of Islam within Malaya's political framework. Due to this, Muslims were preoccupied with protecting their religious values from non-Islamic factors and influences brought by secularism during British colonialism. Thus, Islam has been integral in Malaysian cultures and has been translated into Islamic revivalism.

The universal phenomenon of Islamic revivalism which began in the 1970s (Stivens, 2006, cited in Hearman, 2013) brought a wave of religious awareness in Malaysia (Che Soh as cited in Neo, 2006). Islamic revivalism has been seen as a result of the decline of morality in politics, economic, and social continuums. Islamic revivalism is one of the most commonly termed events to indicate the widespread of Muslims involving in Islamic movements (Nagata, 1980). The social phenomenon has been famously called fundamentalism, reformism, and conservativism which are thought imprecise by Nagata (1980). Rusnak (2012) suggested that Islamic revivalism is marked through the "growing religious identification and piety by people of all generations and backgrounds", (p. 21).

Despite these, Houben (2003), however, argued there is no rationalisation that religion was on the decline for it to revive. But he suggested the growing of Islamic awareness became "more publicly visible and articulate" as Southeast Asian countries went through a process of modernisation (p. 163). Therefore, the highlight of Malaysian revivalism in this research is on pushing for a greater role of Islam. Islamic revivalism differs from one country to another according to its social, political and economic diversity. The analysis of links among state, religion, and society would provide better understanding on it.[1]

Islam has a transnational character that transcends ethnic, cultural, and national barriers which could be found on faith and its sacred sources that promote unity (Anderson, 1983 as cited in Martin, 2014). Abu-Nimer (2001) illustrated several sets of Islamic values and principles that contribute to the framework of Islamic peacebuilding. Among them are justice, equality, the sacredness of human life, making peace, forgiveness, patience, solidarity, and cooperation. Islam becomes a symbol of unity among Malay Muslims in the Malaysian nation-building project. Since national unity has been a struggle within a pluralistic society of Malaya[2] (Shamsul, 1996) Islam has been viewed to provide a catalyst to protect Malay identity (Rusnak, 2004) and to address racial and social segregation caused by the British colonial. The Islamic values embraced by most Malay masses at that time facilitated towards tolerant attitudes. Salleh (2005) argued the Malay value system which was largely forged by Islam prompted Malays into accepting and accommodating non-Malays.

This research argues that the government has greatly influenced the embedment of Islamic values within the society through its Islamic ideology with the support of the

majority of Muslims. As the government saw the potential of Islam, its values and ideals have been indigenised and promoted in elite-constructed ideological discourse. From Gramsci's hegemony, consent on Islamic ideology occurrs as Islamic values have been the tradition of most people in the Malaysian society since independence which assists the imposition of the ideology. This is true in view of Ong's (1990) argument that "Islamic revivalism reveals itself to be an ideology of the middle[-]class brought into being by state policies", (p. 258).

The inauguration of Islam in Malaysia could be recognised in nationalism. Nationalism is artificially constructed as a common culture. According to Reid (2001), nationalism or nation-building requires dominant symbols around which population could be mobilised. Smith (1989) defined nationalism "as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining the autonomy, unity, and identity of an existing or potential nation [which is possible when] some core networks of association and culture, around which and on which nations can be built" are present (p. 108). Among the core networks are language, religious sects, historical territory (Mohamed, 1999) national attire, and historical myths (Reid, 2001). Nationalism allows people "[t]o make sense of complex social and political arrangement, caused by social disruption", (Breuilly, 1982, p. 343). In view of this, nationalism is seen as an elite-driven tool to mobilise power (Mauzy, 2006).

Islam came to be imposed as the state ideology through nationalism. Mauzy (2006) emphasised that ethnic or Malay nationalism was intensely developed during the Japanese outbreak from 1941 to 1945. Most Malays "in government service assumed fairly high positions and became more politically motivated, thus providing the

leadership for the post-war Malay nationalist movement" at that time (Rusnak, 2012, p. 18). The differences of political visions between the indigenous people and immigrants and British colonial policies further marked the instigation of ethnic or Malay nationalism (Lee, 1990). This led to the increased sense of alienation towards colonial power which had greatly influenced the Malay nationalism. The strong Malay sentiment also culminated in the establishment of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in 1946 (Mauzy, 2006) which presently remains as a main political party in Malaysia (Miller, 2004).

Under the umbrella organisation of UMNO, all Malay elites and their followers were brought together. Protecting and promoting Malay interests have been the central objective of UMNO, particularly with regard to ensuring economic security. The political struggle of Malays under UMNO has created boundaries between the Malays and non-Malays which eventually led to a sense of 'us versus them' that put non-Malays in the 'other' position (Mauzy, 2006). In view of Gramsci's hegemony, the ethnic agenda of the Malay is an ideology that serves as a form of state-organised coercion (Ehrenberg, 1999 cited in Landau, 2008) to obtain subordination from non-Malays to consent their peripheral position (Barr and Govindasamy, 2010). There was also a shift from political emphasis in anti-colonial struggle to internal ethnic matters which heightened the nationalism spirit (Rusnak, 2012). As a newly independent country, the domestic ethnic matters involved tensions that were caused by differences of ethnicities which should be reconciled through a nation-building process.

Although Malay nationalism signified the inception of Muslim politics (Miller, 2004; Amrullayev, 2007), Rusnak (2012) argued that Islam only assumed an important

role in the early nation-building after the Malays had been properly mobilised. However, the resurgence of Islamic pride and awareness that enhanced Malay nationalism amongst the Malays in Malaysia should not be denied (Neo, 2006). This was argued by Hamayotsu (2002) that under the then Prime Minister Mahathir's administration, the Malaysian state radically readjusted its ideology from Malay-centric to a more multi-ethnic and global approach. In this approach, greater Islamisation causes and commitment has been undertaken by the Malaysian government. Hamayotsu (2002) claimed that the ideological framework of UMNO has been perceived through *bumiputraism*, the 'Muslim-Malay-centric' ideology. The main aim of this ideology is to ensure the continuation of the political and cultural supremacy of the Malay Muslims.

On this premise, Islam has greatly influenced Malay nationalism in Malaysia. In discussing the global rise of religions in nationalism, Juergensmeyer (2010) recognised the significant contributions of religious leaders, histories, and institutions to assist in developing a nation. He maintained religions like Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and Judaism would provide a significant ideological basis for nationalism. Barr and Govindasamy (2010) observed that the religious project under the governance of Mahathir has been rested on the association between the Malays and the Muslims. Nagata presciently remarked that:

> Malay no longer provides a sufficient distinction between Malays and non-Malays as a basis for ethnic identity. The erosion of the first two elements of 'Malayness' – language and *adat* (custom) – has left only one effective distinguishing feature [which is] Islam (Nagata, 1980, p. 409).

In this statement, Nagata foresighted the significance of Islam that provides a distinctive character for the Malays. Mauzy (2006) and Gellner (1983) likewise

regarded the influence of religion as a membership boundary that realised Malay distinctiveness from other ethnic groups and claimed that Islam is stronger than ethnicity as a marker of nation-building. Lee (1990), however, contended that both ethnicity and religion are important and that "the emergence of ethnic nationalism as a cultural and political response to state domination may assume a religious form since religious symbols provide a readily accessible and powerful resources for mass mobilisation", (p.483). Therefore, in the local Malaysian context, it could be argued that both religion and ethnic are indispensable components in nationalism. Through nationalism project, besides ethnicity Islam is another ideological tool to strengthen the state's hegemony.

It is learned so far that the early post-independence held stronger Islamic values. This was further systematically promoted during Mahathirism (a former prime minister) at both social and political levels. With regards to Gramsci's hegemony, the Islamic ideal has been adopted and adapted as a state hegemonic ideology to ensure consent from the masses. Oswell (2006) emphasised for the government to be in a continuous control, it must not only secure the governmental and political institutions, but also "to have the hegemonic direction of civil society", (p. 44) in other words, their consent. This means, hegemony should be actively maintained. Hegemony is further strengthened through negotiation. For example, the state only promotes values and ideas that seem to concur with and link to the culture of the majority (Oswell, 2006). To some extent, hegemony as the exercise of power with popular consent has been displayed by the Malaysian state through its Islamic campaign.

Other than the Islamic ideology, there are several other examples to illustrate how the state uses hegemonic strategy. The construction and dissemination of intellectual discourse and information are increasingly vital for social control, ideological persuasion, and hegemonic legitimation. To illustrate one of the most prescient ideological persuasions in Malaysia is the Vision 2020 by mid-1990. As paving towards modernity, "vision 2020 for the first time seemed to reach beyond the ethnic appeals that had been characteristic of Malaysian politics for so long", (Stark, 2006, p. 387). The vision 2020 appeared conflicting with Islamic values and cultures due to its modern appeal. For that reason, the former Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammad "has sought to fashion hybrid forms of capitalist modernity, Islamic morality, and ethnic collectivism as a basis for national-popular support", (Hilley, 2000, p. 175) to ensure the continuity of his political legitimation.

National-popular is a key component that should be incorporated in the ideological discourse in establishing popular hegemony. In view of Gramsci's hegemony, consent should be produced and reproduced by the hegemonic ruling group to promote the national-popular. Several important bodies have been called upon to support the state in reproducing dominant interest, ideas, and ideological persuasion. This could be manifested in the form of laws, regulations and outright suppression of any dissenting views (O'Shannassy, 2008).

In this sense, hegemony in Malaysia also involves the coercive exercise of power. As proposed by Gramsci, domination is different from consent when the state is not leading society by consent but through coercive domination (1971). Let us consider about the media which has been discussed in Chapter 2 to disseminate the state

89

ideology. As explored, the state controls media discourse in the form of concentrated ownership where various media being owned by the same few actors such as the BN component parties or people affiliated with the ruling coalition. Briefly, the concentration of ownership and consolidation apply to all the Malay, Chinese, and Indian press. When the media is controlled by the circle of BN component parties (such as UMNO, MCA, and MIC), the media tend to be initiated through decisions made by the government alliance instead of through an Act of Parliament (Zaharom and Mustafa, 1998). According to Kenyon and Marjoribanks (2007), the media ownership comes with a control over production and content. The control decides the content of news and the standpoint assumed by the media in reporting any issues as well as the level of leniency it offers to dissenting and alternative voices (Wang, 2001). The control is also exhibited in the narrow tailoring of media policy (George, 2003) to assist in the production of a specific national-popular culture and ideology.

The state further exercises control through coercive legislations. Although many have argued the exercise of power over media has halted the freedom of expression (e.g.: Mohd Azizuddin, 2004; Wang, 1998; Heufers, 2002; George 2003; George, 2007; Kenyon and Marjoribanks, 2007; Mustafa, 2005a; Crouch, 1996), the government often rationalises this is essential to avoid journalists and reporters from provocative reporting that deviates from a dominant national-popular ideology. As evidenced, the exercise of coercive legislations could be seen in several of these situations. For example, a chief editor of NSTP, A. Kadir Jasin was removed from his position for being too critical of the government in a series of his writings.[3] The same fate befell Johan Jaafar, the Malay-language daily newspaper's editor, *Utusan*, who was forced to resign in 1998

after his story was perceived as undermining the image of the Malay leading party, UMNO.[4]

The government's active exercise of power is also marked through the repressive act of *Operasi Lalang* (weeding Operation) mass arrest in 1987. Fearing that a communal tension at that time would escalate into another ethnic riot, particularly between the Malays and Chinese, the police arrested over 100 leaders and activists under the provision of ISA (Crouch, 1996; Brown, 2005). *Operasi Lalang* was perceived as a massive clampdown of political dissenters since most detainees were among opposition party members of the DAP and social activists (Wang, 1998). Although some of the UMNO party members were also arrested, they were released much earlier than that of the oppositions (Crouch, 1996). Mainstream and alternative newspapers, *The Star*, *Sin Chew Jit Poh* (Chinese language newspaper), and *Watan* biweekly Malay newspaper had also been revoked from publications (Chang, 2005; Wang 2001). Mustafa (2005b) claimed there was a belief that these newspapers had offended the government by questioning the reason of the massive arrest, an example of journalistic independence. Suaram (2005) reported that the three newspapers had undergone management and ownership modification in recovering their permits in an attempt to make them become more compliant towards the government. *The Star*'s permit particularly was limited through the restriction of its freedom in liberal expression after the *Operasi Lalang* (Hilley, 2000).

In this example, coercion illustrates dominance without being hegemonic. As discussed by Gramsci (1971, p. 57), hegemony involves both consent to "intellectual and moral leadership" and forces of "domination". Hegemony further needs to be

positively managed and actively constructed. As shown, the media has been employed as a hegemonic cultural institution to create in the minds of the people that the government is the moral authority. This is implemented by managing and keeping the media discussion within a controllable space. The key to this exercise is to effectively embed the popular ideology of the state in the media output to be represented as a social reality. Ideology in a broad sense, helps to reproduce "social domination, […] legitimate[s] rule by the prevailing groups over subordinate ones, and […] replicate[s] the existing inequalities and hierarchy of power and control (Durham and Kellner, 2009, p. xiv). In short, the discussion exemplifies the complex process of consensus-building in the pursuant of hegemony bearing on the fact that the media must side the government. But to regard the complete powerlessness of the media is contestable since public dissenters have become more vocal in demanding the media to be more accountable when it comes to the public interest.

In chapter 2, I have explored how Malaysia had shifted from a single-party system to a two-party system where the opposition appears to pose stronger challenges to the state's hegemonic structure. To recap, the ruling party as long-established hegemony was challenged in the 1999 election which witnessed the defeat of BN in retaining the Malay vote. BN retreated its losses in the 2004 election when it won 92 percent of the contested seats. The trend was viewed by O'Shannassy (2008) as BN's success in regaining credibility among the subaltern group of the Malay population. This success was argued by O'Shannassy (2008) as contributed by the inability of the counter-hegemony of Barisan Alternative (BA) in addressing a narrow party interest. "In particular, the BA was unable to manage BN provocation and contain tensions over

the role of religion, which eventually led to the departure of the DAP over the issue of an Islamic state", (O'Shannassy, 2008, p. 96).

In this assertion, Islamic issue is a vital ideological persuasion in attaining the state's hegemony. Although the BA has paved a way to non-ethnic politics, it has been impotent in addressing the interest of Islam which had weakened its counter-hegemonic project (O'Shannassy, 2008). In Gramscian term, in order for the BA to overthrow the state's hegemony, they must first become hegemonic by holding the national-popular, in this case, the Islamic ideology. As Gramsci (1971, p. 57) emphasised, "[a] social group can, and indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power". Gramsci went on to note "it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well". Leadership in this notion refers to consent and must be differentiated from domination. Despite the view that the BA failed to displace the ruling power, the contest they have posed should not be underestimated because the ruling hegemony has never been in a stable position since then.

This part has illustrated the reading of the creation, recreation, and maintenance of the Malaysian state ideology through the Gramsci's concept of hegemony. It has been exemplified how the state claims its leadership and obtained public consent. Secondly, to produce a set of hegemonic structure within society, the state has utilised several legitimation strategies such as nationalism, forming an alliance with other groups, media mobilisation, and other symbolic means. The discussion further reveals hegemony in Malaysia is not only maintained through the exercise of "intellectual and moral leadership" but also involves domination (Gramsci, (1971, p. 57). As presented, the

Malay Muslim's hegemonic position was established by the state to ensure the Malay Muslims' cultural and political supremacy above other ethnicities. The next section will discuss civil society as the primary site for counter-hegemonic projects to illustrate state's hegemonic structure should be actively maintained and promoted.

3.4   Hegemony and Power Contestation in Civil Society

Gramsci's theory provides a useful framework to understand state-society relations. Gramsci urged that hegemony has no longer served as society's brainwashing since people are not a passive receiver of hegemonic ideals. People are capable to revolt, moving from a mere acceptance of preconditioned ideas. Gramsci argued that people could become critical thinkers that lead them to explore their own thinking and their deep-seated belief.[5] In section 3.2, I have acknowledged Gramsci's statement that state hegemony may be resisted in the context of a civil society which serves as an arena where contest could take place outside the sphere of the state's control.

Civil society is a concept that is seen crucial to explain public resistance against the state's hegemony. In a broad sense, the civil society "refers to an autonomous, self-organised public and multiple forms of civic initiative which are enabled largely by democratic space guaranteed by a constitution", (Martinez, 2004, p. 27). Civil society also provides a means to influence public policy production and employment. Drawing from Gramsci, Ramasamy (2004) explained that civil society could be perceived as a site of inequality and contestation between the forces of hegemony and counter-hegemony. The contestation is described in terms of the state's struggle to dominate popular values, norms, and ideas from other actors. As Gramsci argued, hegemony

should be constructed and reconstructed over civil society. This is important, particularly when there is a possibility for civil society to cause radical social transformations (Landau, 2008). Hence, civil society needs to be dominated to manufacture consent for political domination.

Based on Landau (2008) and Ramasamy (2004), Gramsci's theory helps to illustrate important aspects of civil society and to understand the dynamics of state-society relations in Southeast Asia. Viewing state and civil society in positive terms (Landau, 2008), Ramasamy highlighted that there is an "integral relationship between both in the enforcement of domination", (p.203). Landau (2008) claimed that some civil society show their preferences to state interests instead of opposing them. One of the commonly played roles of civil society is checking on the power use of the dominant state (Ramasamy, 2004). Besides, works as activist vehicles that monitor human rights and challenge the political agenda of the government, civil society also serves mostly as a welfare-oriented group to provide aids to the vulnerable (Miles and Croucher, 2013).

The composite structure of, and the interactions between diverse colonial histories, ethnicities, religions, cultures, economic development, and state regimes of countries in Southeast Asia lead to the formation of the antagonist civil society (Guan, 2004). In the 1970s, Guan (2004) explained that civil society was perceived as a threat to the state because it served as a means of self-organisation for citizens mainly in Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia and Laos. 'A war of position' is a term used by Gramsci (1971) to refer to this mobilisation which "demands enormous sacrifices by infinite masses of people", (p. 238). Links between oppositional group are developed, and their disparate notion of the opposition are forged coherently into "'counter-hegemonic'

politics" to protest the existing elite power (Miles and Croucher, 2013, p. 416). In this respect, civil society could be suggested as the organised bodies and institutions to contest state hegemony.

The postulation of contestation in civil society against the state hegemony could be seen interpreted in different ways in several studies. For example, Holliday (2016) analysed how the subaltern group of the Islamic Republic of Iran was successful in "overthrowing the state hegemon[y] and establishing themselves as the hegemon[y]", (p. 918). Based on Holliday's study, the success was largely contributed by combining the populist discourse of Laclau and the national-popular collective will of Gramsci. Based on Laclau's populist discourse, 'the people' should be constructed as a political actor or should be taken as a popular subject. The construction of the people as the 'self' also meant that people were the important component of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic. By constructing 'the people' as the 'self', the Islamic Republic of Iran is in antagonism with the Pahlavi regime of the hegemonic 'other'.

The populist discourse became the national-popular collective will that eventually helped the subaltern group challenged the existing hegemony. 'Will' from Gramscian term is "the basis of all political action and can be meaningful only when it is the will of the many or in other words, the collective will", (Daldal, 2014, p. 151). The collective will or the popular beliefs of the masses were raised in the hegemonic political strategy (Hall, 1996) in this respect the appointment of Rouhani as a candidate to restore the Islamic Republic regime's legitimacy. Rouhani is considered as a mandate from above because he was selected by the former president to represent the regime to contest in 2013 election. Rouhani also represented a popular will since he won a popular

mandate and was elected as president. The Islamic Republic continued to portray themselves as subalternity and holder of 'the national-popular collective will'. The close relationship between the ruler and the ruled, that the ruler is particularly selected and chosen by the people for the people, has been one of the contributing factors for this success (Holliday, 2016, 917).

Landau (2008) drew upon Gramsci's work to explore the potential of civil society in Cambodia and Vietnam as a field to contest dominant values and ideologies. Two civil society institutions namely media and trade unions were explored to illustrate his discussion. Borrowing from Sotharith, Landau (2008) reported that civil society in Cambodia could turn into fierce contestation and violent struggles between other social actors and states. For example, journalists must be cautioned not to criticise top government leaders since brutal action may be used against them including killing. Similarly, in Vietnam, several civil organisations have been suppressed for voicing out dissenting views against party policies or being perceived to pose political opposition. Consequently, civil society in Vietnam is not commonly viewed to pose challenges or criticisms, but to support the state. Landau (2008) made an important observation on Gramsci's theoretical framework in relation to Vietnam's situation that "the broadening of the political space is likely to come from changes within state institutions, rather than from the rise of an assertive civil society as imagined in the west" (Gainsborough, 2002, p. 707 cited in Landau, p. 253). Landau concluded that Gramsci's theoretical framework is limited in explaining Vietnam and Cambodia since his civil society is defined as "associatively separate from the state". Whereas, in Vietnam for instance, "the

boundaries between state and society are associatively […] ill-defined and elusive [where] the most important contestations often occur within the state", (p. 254).

Mohamed Osman and Saleem (2016) specifically discussed the role of the Islamic civil society in Malaysia that works to influence an on-going discourse of Islam in politics which eventually shapes the future direction of Islam in the country. They suggested that Islamic civil society groups are less likely to resume the ideological objectives of the mainstream Islamic parties. Rather they remain in the domain of civil society and pursue their own ideological objectives. Mohamed Osman et al. (2016) compared today's Islamic civil society with those in the 1980s and 1990s which involved actively with the mainstream political parties. They further claimed contemporary civil society groups often challenged one another. Hence, civil society is not merely a contest between the state and the civil society groups, but also among civil society actors to dominate popular views and ideas.

Miles and Croucher (2013) used the Gramscian framework to interpret the dramatic outcome of the Malaysian 2008 elections. They illustrated how counter-hegemonic forces have weakened the hegemonic legitimacy of the ruling class. In the 2008 general election, the ruling coalition of BN or National Front suffered great losses whereby they no longer held the two-third majority in parliament. This means BN had limited flexibility and power to amend the constitution. Miles and Croucher (2013) argued the defeat was mainly caused by a strong contestation of civil society organisations against the Malaysian ruling class hegemony. They examined how civil society organisations have been able to forge relationships with one another to explain the extent to which counter-hegemony is being constructed.

Andrew Willford confirmed the counter-hegemony sentiment in his book which focused on the revival of Tamil, Hindu ethnic minority as an unwavering and defensive response to the increasingly popular Islamic hegemony in Malaysia. Willford (2007) presented how the economic and political marginalisation of the Indian in Malaysia has led some sections of its community to revive religiously against the dominant Islamisation programme. For example, through ecstatic religious rituals such as a Thaipusam celebration, they ensured their Tamil identity was best asserted. Within the domain of culture, the minority group displayed their symbolic rejection towards state and elite Islamic ideologies. Although the religious revival could be interpreted as a struggle against the hegemony of elite ideologies, Willford argued the recreation of the superstitious, poor, and backward image of Tamil would further enhance the 'otherness' of the Tamil community in opposition to the nationalist discourse of modern, Muslim Malay.

Yousif (2004) likewise noted this phenomenon stating that Islamic revivalism or the enactment of Islam as Malaysian hegemonic culture has turned religion into a major component of inter-ethnic assertion. Neo (2006) also observed Islam has played aggrandised roles in public sphere resulting in a more pronounced difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. Yousif (2004) argued that the returning of non-Muslims to their religious rites has strengthened their ethnic communal identity which eventually accentuated ethnic divisions between Muslim and non-Muslims. Yousif, however, did not perceive this as a form of resistance to the dominant Islamic ideology.

Barr and Govindasamy (2006) briefly acknowledged the possibility of people outside of the dominant elite community to "retreating into their own constructed ethnic

identities as defence" (p.8). They further alleged that the marginalisation of roles and position of ethnic minorities is not only useful to assert the core national community to a hegemonic status but also increase the likelihood of outbreaks of violence by minorities. The danger behind this arrangement is that it could lead to a harsh and bloody end in the case of failure (Barr et al., 2006). In view of Gramsci's framework, this could be an example where "masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies" (Oswell, 2006, p. 45) where the state has failed to win the national-popular collective will.

In this section, I have presented the state's struggle with other civil actors in dominating and maintaining its popular ideology. As Gramsci suggested, civil society is an arena of contestation. It could be seen how actors of nonconformist voices in civil society have mobilised themselves into organised groups and institutions to contest state hegemony. Looking at the Gramscian term, there is a line of distinction between hegemony and domination as well as consent and coercion. Hegemony is not a passive acquiescence of the masses in all situations including Malaysia because hegemony could also work by gaining consensus from the people before effective leadership could be exercised.

3.5   Literature Review

The preliminary literature reviews have explored several issues that have served as a starting point for this research. The focused literature review, which has been carried out during data analysis, further strengthens my understanding of the theoretical foundations to be interwoven in the discussion of the empirical chapters.

The discussion of Section 3.2 unravels the complexities of the theoretical relations between culture, power, and the state. It has been shown how power resides in ideological hegemony. Discussion based on Gramsci demonstrates hegemony or the exercise of power with popular consent could be established ideologically. Thus, hegemony provides power for the state to forge certain beliefs, practices, and symbols as ideology and culture within society. Though, as mentioned before, hegemony should be constructed, reconstructed and gained by the government because hegemony is unstable.

In the following section, the discussions have focused on how Islamic social orders have come into being in Malaysia and how has Islam emerged as significant norms and practices of the population based on the concept of power in Gramscian ideological hegemony. As illustrated, the Malaysian state has established hegemony using the Islamic ideology since it corresponds with the culture of the majority. By embracing and maintaining the national-popular collective will, the state will continue to preserve its legitimacy. On the part of the minority groups, it could be considered as a state's plan to force them to accept their marginal position. On this basis, I argue the state is the main actor in forging Islamic values and ideas in sustaining the relations of dominance and subordination in the society.

In Section 3.4, it has been shown hegemony is not a passive consent of the masses in Malaysia. As asserted by Storey (2010) it "d[id] not just passively exist as a form of dominance [because it] is continually resisted, limited, altered, and challenged", (p.7). The state must continuously renew, defend, recreate, or even modify its hegemony since dominance may not last. One of the reasons is the growing contestation from the civil society which is organised in the form of institutions. The Malaysian state has been

101

in a constant struggle with civil society groups and tries to mobilise ideas and power into influencing state's policy regarding or against Islam. It is imperative to hold that opposing views in the form of unrelenting grievances and injustices of the voices from below could oppose the established hegemony. For instance, as Willford (2007) revealed, in reaction to the increasingly prominence Islamic hegemony, the Hindu and Tamil have responded by deepening their ritual practices. Since Willford only looked at an Indian community, this further prompts the need to explore challenges among marginalised group or among the majority group. This will focus on two main questions: How state hegemony is opposed? And can it successfully challenge state hegemony?

As further discussed, the Islamic religion complements ethnicity to reinforce Malaysian nationalism project. Barr et al., (2010) claimed Islamic programme is a "tool in the service of ethnic agenda" and not simply an extension of ethnic nationalism program or an independent project (p. 294). On the surface, Barr et al. seemed to suggest religion plays a vital role in nationalism. However, by regarding religion merely as a tool of ethnic agenda, he reduces religion to a secondary role. This view is also held by Miller (2004) who argued, although Islamic symbols and issues have been appealing in Malaysian politics and society, to some extent, Islam remains marginal. Correspondingly, Martinez (2001) and Milner (1981) acknowledged that Islam contributed little to the governance of Malaysia, hence has no significant influence. Houben (2003) however insisted Islam should not be viewed peripherally. Though, he did not attempt to provide detailed elaboration of this claim. Iza (2007, cited in Abdillah, 2014) is of the same view with Houben argued that the identification of

Muslim identity with Malay ethnicity has made Islam as an important component in the Malay polity.

Due to these ambiguous and competing views, there is a need to discover the extent to which Islamic values and practices have influenced Malaysia politically and socially. I argue this could be achieved by exploring how are Islamic cultures constructed and manufactured in the political sphere of Malaysia since that would affect the culture of the society. The emphasis on the nature of Islamic belief and religious teachings that promote good values and nurture kinship in a diversified Malaysian society could act as a catalyst to address social and political conflict. This further warrant an attention to examining how are Islam and its values become the everyday practice of the local people to offer a heterogeneous character of Islamic cultures that serves to counter-view the western stigmatisation of Islam. In relation to Gramscian hegemonic ideology, the analysis should demonstrate the importance of Islamic ideals and values for the continuation of state hegemony.

This study further addresses Hefner's (1997, p. 10) claim that little has been told "about the ways in which Islam became part of the cultures and lifeways of Southeast Asian Muslims". By undertaking a suggestion made by them to detach from the *Shari'ah* viewpoint through the examination of Islam locally and regionally, the looks of Islam in Southeast Asia could be richly distinguished. This study will additionally explore Geertz's claim that Malaysian culture (1957) "was a balanced syncretism of myth and ritual [of] Hindu gods and goddess, Moslem prophets and saints, and local place spirits and demons". Addressing this claim could help to draw out un-Islamic substances from Islamic practices while acknowledging the multi-religiousness of

Malaysian society. In fact, the famous writing of Geertz on Islam as a cultural practice in Indonesia is a prompt to conduct this research in the context of Malaysia.

Abdillah (2014) argued, many research has mainly debated about Islam or Malaysnees in the running of the state. On this basis, this research could offer another area of exploration especially in the social and cultural fabric of Malaysia. In a way, it is also a means to respond to Roff's (1985) verdict that "the place and role of the religion and culture of Islam […] in Southeast Asian societies" has been underrated by western observers in the social science field (p. 7). Roff argued that the political role of Islam is significant to shape the social life of Muslims. Hence, the significance of this work would present one of the homes of Islam in Southeast Asia especially in a multi-ethnic country of Malaysia where religious and ethnic matters have no definite ending.

3.6   Conclusion

Overall, this research is a platform to develop knowledge and understanding of the social and political roles of Islam that contribute to the rising discussion of religion as a cultural form and as a key site of ideological struggle in Southeast Asia, in general, and in Malaysia, in particular. This research would offer an evaluation on different aspects of Islamic practices distinguishing from how Islam is homogenously perceived as a violent religion in the other part of the world which would add to the wider body of knowledge in cultural studies. Most importantly, by exploring the key issues, this research would provide justification the extent to which Islam and its norms, values and practices have been embedded within the fabric of Malaysian society and politics.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY – FRAMEWORK OF A RESEARCH DESIGN

4.0 Introduction

This study is approached using a grounded theory methodology. Informed by an interpretivist theoretical perspective, the research is situated within a constructivist paradigm. The grounded theory methodology is also used as a procedure for data analysis and in this study, it is termed as a grounded theory-lite or an abbreviated grounded theory (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1997; Willig, 2013).

The reflection on the philosophical stance is vital to explain why this study took this route and to clarify the research purpose and the methods that I have selected. It is also to ensure that methods chosen to answer my research questions are congruent with the epistemological framework and methodological strategies. As cited in Evans (2013), the preconceptions that we hold about external realities influence our research programme, methodological approach, and data collection methods. There are four elements of a research design that weight a detailed explanation in this chapter; epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and method (Crotty, 1998; Jones, 2002). Crotty (1998) urged making distinction on these basic research elements which will be the focus of this chapter.

I will present the structure of my research design throughout this chapter. First, I begin with detailing the research questions followed by the discussion of the research approach. I will then present the research paradigm or epistemology. Next, I will explore the methodological consideration of how I decided to employ grounded theory

instead of phenomenology. Following that, I will explore the evolution of grounded theory to illustrate my decision of selecting constructivist grounded theory as propounded by Kathy Charmaz. In addition to this, I will discuss grounded theory-lite in depth to justify its proper use in my research. The final section, I acknowledge the use of discourse analysis in my research.

4.1   Research Questions

As part of a research process, understanding the research question is fundamental because that would point researchers to a certain direction and put them as "active agent[s] in the research process beginning with the choice of a research question", (Jones, 2002, p. 463). On this notion, it is important to elucidate decisions that I made in all phases of this project starting with the research questions. The clarification of the research questions would influence the epistemological position and methodological choices of this study.

The general focus of this research is to examine the extent to which Islamic cultures have been interwoven in the political and societal fabric of Malaysia. Since the coming of Islam to Malaya, Islam, and the state have been in a cordial relationship. The fate of Islam changed drastically under the tutelage of the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Islam has since assumed active agencies in the governance of Malaysia and has been revived within the society through Islamisation project. Islamisation, as used in this research, refers to the pursuit of politics based on Islamic ideals, values, and norms by considering the local history, culture, and situation.

I contend that the Islamisation of Malaysia is a politically improved strategy from ethnic to religious emphasis to harmonise with the dominant culture or the Malay culture. The state has utilised ideological power and mobilised various cultural institutions to establish hegemony. Considering the pluralistic ethnic background of the Malaysian population, besides active ethnic accommodation, Islamic ideology has become another dominant ideology to ensure the continuity of the state's hegemonic power. The argument is proposed based on the vast amount of literature that I have come across while conducting focused literature reviews (e.g.: Barr and Govindasamy, 2010; Haque, 2003; Mauzy 2006; Rusnak, 2012; Houben, 2003; Miller, 2004; Nagata, 1980). From this notion, the state's incorporation of Islam has shaped the construction, presentation, protection, and prohibition of cultural elements in the society.

The adoption of delayed literature review in grounded theory has helped the refinement and direction of my research questions. The focused literature has been useful whereby it has worked as a tool to focus on a specific research area at the time of data analysis which has refined the research question in producing meaningful data. Therefore, the research questions that underpinned this study are expressed as follows:

(i)   How is Islamic ideology implemented in Malaysia's politics?

(ii)   How are Islamic cultures constructed and manufactured in Malaysia?

(iii)   How is Islam practiced in the Malaysian society?

(iv)   How has Islam influenced the culture of the Malaysian society?

(v)   What are the challenges in the preferential construction and maintenance of Islam in Malaysia?

4.2   Research Approach

In order to gain comprehensive interpretations of people's understandings on the questions under investigation, the quantitative study is not appropriate. This study adopts a qualitative research approach that involves an interpretive and a naturalistic inquiry of a phenomenon in natural settings (Willig, 2013). The approach in qualitative research is "effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations" (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey, 2005, p. 1). A defining characteristic of qualitative research is its ability to present multi-faceted descriptions of experiences offered by people on a specific issue (Mack, et al., 2005). Qualitative research is also useful to provide descriptions and explanations of events and experiences as opposed to making a prediction inherent in quantitative research (Willig, 2013).

The general assumptions about qualitative research could be summarised as (a) a naturalistic inquiry into participants' natural setting, (b) an interest in complex processes, and (c) a reliance on an inductive approach to data analysis and interpretation (Charmaz, 2000). Based on these assumptions, the qualitative approach could provide a deeper understanding of the complexities of the social world through interactive methods such as interviewing to provide a myriad of meanings. Since this research is concerned with the lived experiences of the participants, the qualitative research approach is seen appropriate to offer a rich interpretation on the constructions and actual practices of Islam in Malaysia which, in turn, would provide answers to the research question being investigated. The next part details out the epistemology and theoretical

108

perspective of this study which has guided the choice of methodology and methods of this research.

4.3 Research Paradigm

Paradigmatic assumptions inform a theoretical perspective which influences methodological decision that researchers make. This methodology further shapes the techniques and procedures to finding answers to research questions called methods. Figure 1 below summarised the framework of this research.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│         Epistemology            │
│         Constructivist          │
└─────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│     Theoretical perspective     │
│         Interpretivist          │
└─────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│         Methodology             │
│        Grounded theory          │
└─────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│           Methods               │
│  Interview and focus group interview │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
```
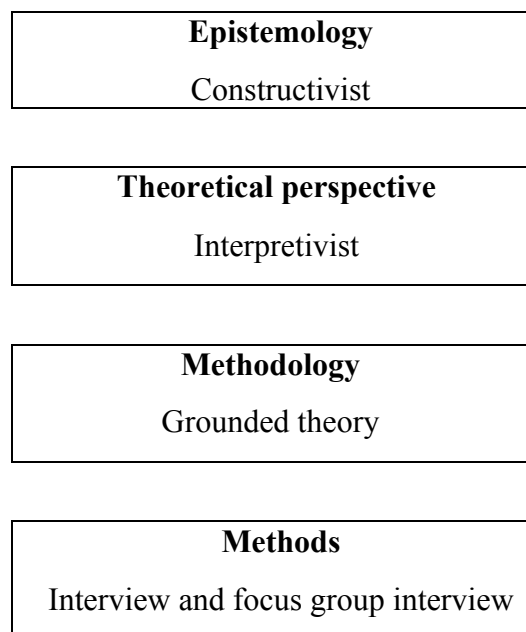
Figure 1 Philosophical framework of the research

Epistemology refers to "the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology", (Crotty, 1998, p. 3) "and the ways in which [knowledge] can be produced" (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1997). Borrowing from Blaikie (1993), McCann and Clark (2003) defined epistemology as the "underlying

assumptions about how it is possible to acquire knowledge about social reality, and how the knowledge that exists can be made known" (p. 7). Stating an epistemological grounding means having a clear position of how and what could be found in our research (Willig, 2013).

A range of epistemologies described by Crotty (1998) included objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism. The constructionist epistemology will be described in relation to the objectivist paradigm to provide a clear explication on the philosophical grounding of this research. The objectivist epistemology holds that "things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experience, that they have truth and meaning residing in them as objects", (Crotty, 1998, p. 5). This research paradigm suggested that there is a single reality which is measurable and waiting to be discovered. The objectivist view also claims that research is free from researcher's values (Broido and Manning, 2002) and is realist in ontology based on the belief that reality is a concrete truth.

At the other end of the stream is constructivism which is based on subjectivism challenging the objectivist epistemology. The constructivist viewpoint argues that knowledge and reality result from the human engagement with their world rejecting the notion of objective truth (Crotty, 1998). Constructivism is transactional. From a constructivist perspective, meaning is not created but rather constructed as a result of the subject-object interaction (Williams, 2012). Borrowing from Guba and Lincoln (1989), Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006a) emphasised that "realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exists as many such constructions as there are individuals" (p. 43). This implies that the same phenomenon may give a different meaning to different

110

people thus resulting in multiple constructions of realities. Similar to Guba and Lincoln (1994), researchers are assumed to uphold a relativist ontology if they believe in the diversity of interpretations of the world.

Epistemologically, the mutual creation of subjective realities between researcher and participants is the main emphasis of constructivism (Mills, Bonner, and Francis, 2006a). Based on the notion of constructivism, researchers are part of the research process, acting as an active agent in a social interaction. Research adopting a constructivist view does not only consider participants' perspectives but also incorporate the researcher's worldview within a research process. This is inherent in the ontological assumption of relativism as well as multiple realities of subjectivism (Mills, Bonner, and Francis, 2006b; Charmaz, 2008). In addition, constructivism also looked at negotiated meanings which are influenced by culture and history as well as developed through social interaction (Creswell, 2007). On this basis, context further influences the construction of truths and realities.

Crotty (1998) laid out several types of **theoretical perspectives** such as positivism, interpretivism, critical inquiry, postmodernism, and feminism. He defined theoretical perspective as "the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria", (p. 3). Gray (2004) contended positivism and interpretivism turned to be possibly among the most prominent theoretical perspectives used in research. Positivism is related to objectivist epistemology while constructivist epistemology is rooted in the interpretivist tradition (Gray, 2004; Gardner, McCatcheon, and Fedoruk, 2012; Taghipour, 2014).

111

In interpretive paradigm, the researcher is concerned to comprehend the subjective knowledge of individuals (Bryman, 2007). Williams (2000) used interpretivism to "interpret the meanings and actions of actors according to [her] own subjective frame of reference" (p. 210). In support of this view, Smith (1983) proposed that in interpretivism, the researchers' beliefs "determine what should [be] count[ed] as facts" (p. 11). In this sense, interpretivism is open to any possible interpretative understandings of a reality and is, thus, a result of construction. Through the lens of this position, I would attempt to make sense of my participants' data without constraining myself to a single interpretation.

A paradigm also known as a worldview entails a set of beliefs as guiding action (Creswell, 2009, p. 6). This research is situated within a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm based on my personal worldview and the nature of the research questions that I explore. The research procedures and methods of this research have been informed by this paradigm. The research questions of this study will be explored through the assumption of the existence of multiple truths. Consistent with the constructivist paradigm, the research process is influenced by my presence as a researcher. As such, the knowledge that is produced throughout this research is influenced by my own values and interpretations and is not likely to result in similar knowledge and assumptions if explored by other researchers.

Based on the constructivist-interpretivist philosophical position, I have entered the social world of the media practitioner, government authority, and lay people with the aim to gather in-depth views and information regarding the extent to which Islamic cultures have been embedded in the Malaysian society and politics. I draw conclusions

112

from the collected data which have provided interpretations and explanations of 'how' Islamic ideology has been constructed and implemented in Malaysia. Thus, suggesting the importance of the religion in the country in answering the research questions.

4.4   Methodological Considerations

In searching for a methodology that suits the epistemology of my research, I was directed towards understanding phenomenology and grounded theory and their different approaches in approaching data analysis. While the methods of each of them seem promising, they are different in certain ways.

Phenomenology, rooted from the philosophical work of Husserl, is a study of understanding the participants' lived experiences. The methodological device of bracketing in phenomenology is slightly different from constructivist grounded theory. In phenomenology, bracketing is used by researchers prior to and throughout the research process by purposely holding one's own knowledge, values, beliefs, and conceptions of a subject (Carpenter, 2007 as cited in Chan, Fung, and Chien, 2013; Heath and Cowley, 2004) with the aim to see the phenomenon under study afresh (Kirkham, Smith, and Havsteen-Franklin, 2015).

This contrasts with the constructivist grounded theory which proposes preconceptions about a subject under investigation, such as through reviews of literature, would offer a point to commence a research. Suddaby (2006) suggested researchers should not start a research by postponing literature reviews until data collection and data analysis are conducted. This, according to him, is one of the

misconceptions of grounded theory which is usually urged by a drive for a new discovery. Charmaz (2006; 2008) similarly recognised the use of prior knowledge and theoretical preconceptions in constructivist grounded theory. Thus, having a preconceived idea would crystallise research direction and objectives. However, Charmaz (2006) warned that the preconceived theoretical concepts should be safeguarded from being imposed on data. She stressed out the need to bracketing researchers' internal values by being reflexive. She suggested by withholding preconceptions, researchers would be able to see the world under investigation in a new light. In short, constructivism in grounded theory offered a balance between being involved through a prior knowledge and keeping a distance using reflexivity.

The point of difference between phenomenology and grounded theory could be seen in Starks and Trinidad (2007) who suggested phenomenology research is interested in participants with similar characteristics who could offer description about their experiences which are thick to arrive at its core element. She further asserted that participants in grounded theory are recruited to include people with different experiences "so as to explore multiple dimensions of the social processes under study", (p. 1375). This is also evidenced in Boeije's (2002) guidelines for using a constant comparative analysis, a core element of grounded theory that encourages researchers to compare views of participants with distinct features.

The aim of the present research is to explore the perception of the constructions and practices of Islamic cultures from different categories of respondents. Since this study is not concerned with an individual experience, hence, phenomenology is not the best option. Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p. 144 cited in Reiter, Stewart, and Bruce, 2011)

stated that phenomenology is aimed at integrating the meaning units of experiences into a 'typical' experience.

On the other hand, my values as a researcher suggest that participants living in the same social setting might interpret the same phenomenon differently. This would produce different impressions of a reality and would be more appropriately addressed using constructivist grounded theory. Suddaby (2006) also argued that grounded theory should aim for interpreting how individual actors see the world under investigation from subjective experiences. The attention towards the subjective construction of meanings is, therefore, resonated with constructivist grounded theory.

In this research, I adopt the constructivist grounded theory as proposed by Kathy Charmaz. The next part discusses the evolution of grounded theory and explores a constructivist grounded theory concept in detailed. Attempts to differentiate grounded theory from the continuum of objectivism and constructivism will be made.

4.5 The Evolution of Grounded Theory

This study is guided by the grounded theory qualitative approach to data analysis. Grounded theory was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s in response to the positivism which aims at proving and disproving a preconceived idea or hypothesis using a scientific method (Cho and Lee, 2014) which is inherent in the quantitative research. Glaser and Strauss are against the assumptions "that the purpose of social research is to uncover pre-existing and universal explanations of social behaviour", (Suddaby, 2006, p. 633). Their book, *The Discovery of Grounded*

Theory 1967 "advocated developing theories from research grounded in data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories", (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). Glaser and Strauss believed both qualitative and quantitative approaches neglect theory development because much attention had been directed towards verifying theory (Cooney, 2010).

Glaser termed grounded theory as a general method which contains "a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories" (Grounded Theory Institute, 2013 as cited in Cho and Lee, 2014, p. 2). Glaser and Strauss proposed grounded theory could be used as both method and methodology (Cho and Lee, 2014). Glaser (1992) defined grounded theory as "a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area" (p. 16). This definition implies grounded theory is neutral ontologically and epistemologically (Breckenridge, Jones, Elliott, and Nicol, 2012) which allows flexibility for researchers to adopt any philosophical stance appropriate to their research (Holton, 2007 as cited in Breckenridge, el at., 2012).

Since its inception, many modifications have been done to grounded theory. It was argued by Walker and Myrick (2006), Cooney (2010), and Evans (2013) that Corbin's and Strauss's (1990) strict application of grounded theory method which was different from that of the Glaser's and Strauss's original version marked a methodological divergence between the two founders. Grounded theory has been through a series of debate especially when the theory's co-originators had distinguished

116

themselves in the data analysis procedures (Walker and Myrick, 2006; Cooney, 2010; Evans, 2013).

Glaser was seen to remain faithful to his version of grounded theory. In his publication, Glaser (1992) outspokenly argued that Strauss's grounded theory is totally different from the original version of grounded theory that he claimed as "full conceptual description" (p. 3). He challenged Strauss and Corbin for contradicting the core component of grounded theory by imposing preconceived idea in data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Evans (2013) claimed that the main differences that have been observed between the two are in their "approach and rigor" of data collection and in the "handling and analysis" procedures. While many researchers remain steadfast in the traditional grounded theory, several others went further to develop the method such as Kathy Charmaz who proposed grounded theory from a constructivist point of view.

Basically, there are three widely employed types of grounded theory that provided guidelines to researchers to approach data analysis. They are the classic (Glaserian) grounded theory, the Straussian grounded theory or qualitative data analysis (QDA), and the Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory. It is important to explore each of them to help explain which version of grounded theory this research has adopted and why it has been chosen as a method of data analysis. In line with Breckenridge's et al. (2012) suggestion, to use grounded theory, researchers should be clear in their methodological stance and philosophical position as they disputed over the pick and mix approach.

Glasserian grounded theory is known as a classic grounded theory "as recognition of the methodology's origin", (Glaser and Holton, 2004, p. 2). In classic grounded theory, researchers begin a study with a general interest in a topic which will develop and refine as research progresses through data collection and data analysis (Jones and Alony, 2011). Special attention should be given to every process of the research because it would contribute towards theory development.

Researchers engaging in the classic grounded theory have been reminded to avoid from a comprehensive literature review prior to their research because this is considered as a violation of the fundamental tenets of grounded theory since it would hinder them from becoming theoretically sensitive. The idea is, having a priori would restrict the natural emergence of a new category in data collection as well as data analysis (Glaser and Holton, 2004). Glaser also claimed that researchers would have been "turned off by the blind alleys of reformulated ideas in evidentiary, preconceived research and prestudy literature reviews", (p. 841). The original founder of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss, further stressed that theory should be grounded in the actions, interactions, and social processes of individuals that should assist in a theory development (Creswell, 2007) and to avoid concepts from literature from becoming a fixed lens through which researchers perceive the world (Charmaz, 2006). McCann and Clark (2003) summarised grounded theory could be achieved through three important processes: induction, deduction, and verification which may not need to be in chronology.

In contrast, Heath and Cowley (2004) criticised this view stating that no one is completely free from past experiences and knowledge. Corbin and Strauss (1990)

argued that researchers should begin their study with certain ideas as a starting point. Charmaz (2001) maintained that the use of preconceptions and assumptions would inform researchers' inquiry and encouraged the employment of sensitising concepts as a filter to their interpretation of data. Jones and Alony (2011), however, noted pre-determined ideas may have a great impact on a research route and approach. In Glaser's view, the literature is still useful but will only be treated "as another source of data to be integrated into the constant comparative analysis process once the core category, its properties, and related categories have emerged and the basic conceptual development is well underway", (Glaser and Holton, 2004, p. 12). Glaser further contended that grounded theory has been remodelled to a systematic version of qualitative data analysis (QDA) procedures that forces grounded theory methodological process to follow suit leaving little freedom for novice researcher to allow for theory development (Glaser and Holton, 2004).

Meanwhile, Strauss's and Corbin's version of grounded theory is widely known as a systematic design which has appealed to many novice researchers as well as researchers new to a qualitative study. They focused on three levels of coding procedures: open, axial, and selective coding. Their coding procedures appear different from Glaser who divided coding into substantive and theoretical coding. The former involves open and selective coding while the latter concerns with the incorporation of substantive codes as hypotheses to produce a theory (Walker and Myrick, 2006). It is noted that open coding in both versions is similar except for selective coding in Straussian which came later after axial coding as compared to Glaserian. Walker and Myrick (2006) summed up that on the surface, Glaserian and Straussian grounded

theory is similar in their research approach such as data gathering, coding, comparing, theoretical sampling, generating core categories and developing theory. The differences are only clear when these processes are executed.

Nevertheless, Glaser and Strauss maintained that data collection should be carried out in concert with data analysis because the following data collection in grounded theory will be greatly influenced by its prior data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Cho and Lee, 2014) which suggests what and where to sample next. In this respect, participants are selected using theoretical sampling which involves selection based on an emerging theory or data during data analysis. Analysis, coding, and sampling should occur simultaneously in grounded theory. Throughout these processes, the use of constant comparative analysis is important to ensure systematic theory generation. It is noteworthy that a constant comparison method is another name for grounded theory because it is core to theory development in grounded theory research (Walker and Myrick, 2006).

According to the original grounded theory, there are two main purposes of grounded theory; the first is towards building a theory and the second as suggested by Urquhart, Lehmann, and Myers, (2010) is aimed to broaden its scopes which ultimately enhance the theory – if a research starts with a theory – still, verification or falsification are not the main objectives. This implies grounded theory could also be employed on already developed theory or research which researchers foresee as needing further development. As cited in Suddaby (2006), Glaser and Strauss (1967) who further reminded that grounded theory is aimed to draw a "fresh understanding about patterned

relationships between social actors and how these relationships and interactions actively construct reality", (p. 636).

It is known that a well-built research design is shaped through the researchers' ability to make an informed decision on which research paradigm suits their philosophical position about reality. Walker and Myrick (2006) proposed researchers are advised to be clear in the method of analysis before adopting grounded theory. The decision is influenced by researchers' ontological and epistemological positions. Charmaz (2003) proposed that researchers' ontology and epistemology are important to guide data analysis (cited in Breckenridge et al., 2012). Evans (2013) observed several studies had employed grounded theory as a method unjustly by adhering to its basic tenets only. Evans claimed their research "failed to effectively draw [...] differences between [grounded theory] methodologies", (p. 38). Glaser (1998 as cited in Heath and Cowley, 2004) conversely suggested researchers should focus more on doing grounded theory rather than discussing it; only then they would grasp the skill to apply it into their research practice. On this note, the next section has tried to provide justification on the underlying methodological differences between classic grounded theory and constructivist model of grounded theory as proposed by Charmaz. Reasons for choosing constructivist grounded theory are also discussed.

4.6   Constructivist Grounded Theory by Kathy Charmaz

Charmaz's (2000) constructivist grounded theory was proposed in response to methodological divide between Glaser and Strauss which she claimed "as a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism and offers accessible methods for taking

qualitative research into the 21st century" (p. 510) and to be used more flexibly (Charmaz, 2006). Mills et al. (2006b) asserted grounded theory has been "adopted and adapted […] to fit with a variety of ontological and epistemological positions such as constructivism, feminism, critical thinking, and postmodernism", (pp. 8-9). They discussed each version of grounded theory is undertaken based on a researcher's philosophical position.

Undertaking this view, this research has explored grounded theory from Charmaz's term in relation to Glaser since both forms could be better differentiated from the objectivist and constructivist point of views. The work of Kathy Charmaz has helped me to discern the application of grounded theory as a research process. My understanding on the epistemological and philosophical positions underpinning each version of grounded theory was increased through debates found in a diverse corpus of grounded theory literature. I also referred to Charmaz's book of Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis which was published in 2006 for methodology and method.

Williams (2012) provided an account about Charmaz's disposition of her grounded theory. She described Charmaz as founding her grounded theory from that of the founder, Glaser, and practising the fluidity of Strauss. She further argued that the constructivist grounded theory is based on "the assumption that any theoretical rendering offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of what is happening within the given scene", (Williams, 2012, p. 46). In this sense, constructivist grounded theory holds reality is something that could be influenced by researchers, hence, not existed for a discovery.

I view the epistemology and the theoretical perspective of the constructivist grounded theory is congruent with my philosophical stance as a researcher. Constructivist grounded theory is rooted in an interpretive tradition (Williams, 2012; Lawrence and Tar, 2013). Charmaz (2008) emphasised on differentiating between the constructivist and the objectivist grounded theory. The philosophical position underlying the constructivist research differs from the classic grounded theory which is ontologically realist and epistemologically objectivist; while also related to a positivist paradigm. Charmaz (2008) explicated through the lens of positivism, grounded theory is used to discover a single truth that is free from any values, including the researchers' internalised views of truth. She also proposed a grounded theory from the constructionist view is relativist in ontology (many realities) and subjectivist in epistemology (participant and researcher co-construct knowledge) (Mills et al., 2006b). From the constructivist notion, the employment of grounded theory is directed towards multiple constructions of realities. Therefore, the construction of the value-free reality from the positivist position, to my view, is problematic because it ignores the subjective reality of the researcher and participants.

Charmaz additionally differentiated the researcher's role from 'discovering' reality in classic grounded theory to 'constructing'. Classic grounded theory proposes truth is an objective or existing fact to be unearthed by the researcher (Charmaz, 2006; 2008). In constructivist grounded theory, codes created are not free from the influence of the researcher's interpretation and perspective (Charmaz, 2001). Charmaz (2001) asserted it is the researchers who "*define* what is happening in the data" instead of "discover[ing] (p. 684). From the objectivist view, knowledge produced is detached

123

from the researchers' perspectives. Charmaz (2001), however, suggested that her notion of grounded theory is to construct and offer an interpretive depiction of the phenomenon under study. She emphasised on the involvement of the researcher in the construction of realities through interaction. Data are not simply viewed as observed objects but as a product of the researcher and participants' co-construction of knowledge (Charmaz, 2008). Charmaz (2001) concluded "data analysis as a construction that not only locates the data in time, place, culture, and context but also reflects the researcher's thinking. Thus, the sense that the researcher makes the data does not inhere entirely within those data", (p. 35). The emphasis on the researchers' role, hence, influences to which the research is directed and unfolded.

Another substantial distinction between classic and constructivist grounded theory is in their methodology. As mentioned before, Glaser advocated grounded theory as a general method which is free from any theoretical position. Glaser (2002 as cited in Breckenridge, et al., 2012) criticised Charmaz for restricting the research approach through a fixed constructivist lens. To a certain extent, Charmaz agreed on this view that no specific epistemology should be tied to grounded theory (Williams, 2012). She proposed that "researchers can use basic grounded theory guidelines such as coding, memo-writing, and sampling for theory development, and comparative methods are, in many ways, neutral", (Charmaz, 2006). Associating herself with Corbin and Strauss, Charmaz (2012) indeed encouraged researchers to be explicit about their theoretical positions and stances. The research process would be clear by stating philosophical standpoints and would give better explication as to how the research is conducted. On a

different note, researchers who refuse to approach their study from a theoretical perspective could take up the classical grounded theory as advocated by Glaser.

Charmaz (2001) identified the constructivist study is more interested in exploring "participant's definitions of terms, situations, and events and try to tap the participant's assumptions, implicit meanings, and tacit rules" as compared to arriving at "accurate information about chronology, events, settings, and behaviours", (p. 681). In this respect, a constructivist grounded theory method is appropriate for this research in exploring perceptions, understanding, and interpretation of the manifestations and practices of Islamic cultures within the social and political context. Hence, choosing this paradigm would allow the multiple constructions of realities of this research topic.

It is concerned by Hernandez and Andrews (2012 as cited by Brian, 2014) about the possibility of the researcher's perspectives to outweigh the participants' views since the constructivist grounded theory advocates the researcher-participant co-construction of reality. Charmaz is similarly concerned with the position of a researcher in relation to the participants' experiences (Mills et al., 2006a) state that giving participants voice remain the main principle of grounded theory (Breckenridge et al., 2012). For this reason, researchers are advised to be reflexive in their research processes one of which is using memo.

The co-construction of meaning and experience between participants and researcher is further addressed by Mills et al. (2006a). They suggested that researchers should disclose themselves as the author of their research. Undertaking this view, I have written this thesis in the first person as opposed to the third person voice especially in

125

this chapter and the following chapters. As Webb (1992) suggested, this technique is important to acknowledge a researcher's "crucial role in shaping the data or ideas presented", (p. 747). By writing in the first person, I believe that my involvement in this thesis as a researcher would be more recognisable and meaningful. I view this approach as consistent with the epistemological and the ontological positions underpinning the constructivist paradigm.

Charmaz (2006) contended that pursuing the already discovered phenomenon is central to grounded theory. Adopted from Grbich (2007, p. 70), Barnett (2012) argued "when there is a need for a new theoretical explanation built on previous knowledge to explain changes in the field", (p. 48), undertaking grounded theory methodology would be seemly. Charmaz (2012) further elaborated that most researchers using the grounded theory follow the iterative approach while several of them make comparisons but only a few would arrive at a theory development. This suggests grounded theory procedures may be employed even if the aim is not for a theory building. In accordance with Strauss and Corbin (as cited in Cooney, 2010), grounded theory techniques may be used to construct meaningful descriptions even though theory generation may not be the main aim. For this research, I employ constructivist grounded theory only to arrive at categories and themes that are meaningful to understand the phenomenon under scrutiny but not for a theory building.

In short, several common features of grounded theory that should be addressed in research could be summarised as simultaneous data collection and analysis, treatment of literature, theoretical sensitivity, discovering basic social processes within data, identifying core themes early in the data analysis, theoretical sampling to refine codes

and categories, coding, inductive approach in constructing categories, making systematic comparison, memo writing, integration of categories into a theoretical framework, and ensuring rigor (Charmaz, 2001; 2006; McCann and Clark, 2003; Mills et al., 2006a; Barnett, 2012).

4.7 The Abbreviated Grounded Theory

My decision to adopt grounded theory has been delayed since the focus of the study has only been defined after data collection was concluded. Before decided, I explored several methodological stances and methods to suit my research. I was encouraged by Reiter, Stewart, and Bruce (2011) who claimed that delayed research method selection was possible provided the research questions and methods of data collection are congruent with the potential methodology to be adopted; such as grounded theory or phenomenology which were discussed in the previous section. I decided to embark on grounded theory but excluded several of its elements. This part entails the rationale of applying grounded theory in my data analysis although I did not fully adhere to grounded theory basic tenets as proposed by the main founders, Glaser, Strauss, and Charmaz.

Grounded theory has been considered in this research because it provides "a set of useful strategies for handling, organising, and analysing unstructured qualitative material", (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1997, p. 245). Although some of the basic principles of grounded theory have not been satisfied, my data analysis has tried to be in line with what has been proposed by the constructivist approach. This is approved by Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) who claimed that a full version of grounded theory may not be

necessarily adopted when researchers are only interested in the analysis techniques. Urquhart et al., (2010) noted some studies use grounded theory as a coding method. The flexible use of grounded theory is further seen through the researchers' adoption of its procedures to suit their research questions and contexts such as the constant comparison and coding approaches (Neff, Potts, and Whithaus, 2011). Hughes and Jones (2003) argued many interpretivist studies use grounded theory for the practical application of its procedures and processes with the aim to provide rigour and traceability towards emerging theory. On these premises, grounded theory is chosen to provide a sense of confidence in handling uncertainty throughout a research process due to its practical guide (Hughes and Jones, 2003). These are among the possible use of grounded theory.

The delayed adoption of grounded theory also implies that data was not analysed while being collected. Hence, the iterative process of concurrent data analysis and data collection was absent. The main reason for this was because I had anticipated that simultaneous data collection and data analysis was challenging and a longer time would be needed. This also contributed to the fact that the fieldwork was conducted in Malaysia and there was time limit given by the sponsor for the fieldwork.

Theoretical sampling was not fulfilled since data were not analysed during the fieldwork. To prevent this from reducing the credibility of my research, I have maintained contacts with several informants during the data analysis process. As Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) suggested, researchers could return "to the original participants to explore further aspects of the emerging interpretations", (p. 258). Charmaz (2006) similarly held that interviewing the same person is also perceived as a method for exploring events and processes for further refinement. By returning to my

128

data to check the breadth and depth of my findings, I have ensured that the analysis is grounded in my respondents' viewpoints.

Comprehensive analysis of grounded theory could still be achieved provided that primary data are accessible and information about the social context of the research is clear. This is illustrated in a study by Andrews, Higgins, Andrews, and Lalor (2012) which undertook Glaser's suggestion to research on secondary data. They found that grounded theory could be used to arrive at a theory development although the result was not conclusive due to limited primary data sources. They suggested data which did not strictly follow theoretical sampling in grounded theory would still be relevant for analysis despite several difficulties such as restricted data at hand and limited access to the original field notes and memos.

Amsteus (2014) assessed the validity of research which diverges from the original grounded theory methodology. He considered research using diverged-grounded theory is valid. For Amsteus (2014), what more important is for researchers to be transparent in their chosen principles and procedures of methodology in specific circumstances rather than to follow rigid procedures. Charmaz also reminded to employ grounded theory more flexibly suggesting students and researchers alike should make use of the approach to fit their study in an effort to "explore possibility and contest taken-for-granted practices" which "would add another voice in landing a creative consideration of research issues and design," (Johnson, 2014, p. 101).

For this research, I adopt the grounded theory approach according to Charmaz and is called a grounded theory-lite, a term coined by Lear (2014). The approach is

chosen for a systematic categorisation of data analysis such as in the mapping of respondents' concepts and categories (Willig, 2013). The abbreviated grounded theory method has, thus, been employed due to its structured framework to inform the data analysis procedure which is important especially for a Ph.D. thesis. This research could be regarded as a reply to Charmaz's (2001; 2006) invitation on resorting to a flexible use of the principles and practices of grounded theory methods.

4.8   Discourse Analysis

As one of the interpretive approaches, discourse analysis can be used to assist the data interpretation since it deals with meaning and understanding (Starks and Trinidad, 2007). "[Discourse analysis] is often described as a methodology or as a theoretical perspective rather than a method (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.3), as a general epistemological perspective on social life containing both methodological and conceptual elements (Wood and Korger, 2000, p.3), […] or as a craft skill or form of scholarship (Billig, 1988; Potter 1997)," (Nikander, 2008). In this study, discourse analysis is referred to as a methodology in assisting the review of literature particularly those developed in Chapter 2 and data analysis as presented in finding chapters.

Literature review requires the critical and interpretive process of reviewing information from several sources such as explaining research procedures, findings, and interpretations of certain phenomena. Literature review is more complex than writing a high school term paper as it involves the comprehensive interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and summarisation on a specific subject matter (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins, 2012).

According to Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2014), this process requires the help of discourse analysis since the literature could be explored for rhetorical organisation, variability, accountability and positioning. Further, it is appropriate to employ discourse analysis in the study of literature on the premise that "humans construct their realities, through what is 'out there' beyond human control places serious constraints on this construction (so 'reality' is not 'only' constructed)," (Gee, 2005, as cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 2014, p. 55). This further coincides with the philosophical stance of this research.

In addition to this, "discourse analysis [also] involves tracing the historical evolution of language practices and examining how language both shapes and reflects dynamic cultural, social, and political practices," (cited in Starks and Trinidad, 2007, p.1374). With the help of discourse analytical approach, my data has been explored with the aim of gaining new insights and interrogating how meanings are constructed through talk (Nikander, 2008). For example, discourse analysis has been used as part of the framework in analysing Islamic cultures. How do we understand Islamic cultures and what consequences does Islamic cultures have on Malaysian. The focus could be, for instance, the discursive construction of Islamic cultures and the questions of power and dominant groups.

Therefore, through the lens of discourse analysis, I could identify how the embedment of Islam as cultural practices are constructed and negotiated by the participants of this research. As mapped out in the finding sections, government discourse appears to be an important discourse which largely derived from government officers' data. To understand the power relations pattern, it is fruitful to be an 'insider'

during data analysis with the aim to appreciate the embedded social practices (Hewitt, 2009). Hence, methodologically, discourse analysis urges the need to be reflexive.

In sum, I believe that literature review should be considered as a methodological process which hence the application of discourse analysis will give meaningful interpretation to the literature analysis. The literature review is also hoped to be rigorous in the sense of being transparent and comprehensive (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012) through the discourse analysis perspective. Besides, the use of discourse analysis in interrogating respondents' view have assisted in the investigation of power relations in the society and to "formulate normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye of the possibilities for social change," (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p.4).

4.9 Reflexive Notes

My motivation to undertake this research came from my experience as a practising Muslim living in a country which consisted of multiple races, led by majority Malay political leaders, and Muslim is the largest population. I was drawn to understand how Islamic ideology has been embedded in the society and politics and how successful the implementation of Islam in the socio-political context has been. I was driven to find out how people perceive this and what interpretation they give to the construction and the practice of Islamic cultures since Islam is not the sole religion of the population. Especially from the views of the non-Muslims, I felt the concern to understand them more deeply since I always had the belief non-Muslims were able to accept the Islamic

ideology without much apprehension. In this way, I challenge my taken-for-granted understanding of the reality.

My experience around the cultural aspects of Islam further motivates to pursue this topic. I was often amazed by the broader role of Islam in Malaysian politics. The adoption of Islam as cultural practices in the Southeast Asian country like Malaysia has come with some cultural, social, and political implications. I, therefore, felt the need to explore these implications in the society which might not be meaningful without exploring interpretations from various ethnic groups.

To address this topic, I was, however, uncertain of which methods to employ and how to properly utilise them. Without thorough understanding on basic research elements, it was a challenge to determine the further direction of my research. Before I chose constructivist grounded theory, I thought I would be using the classic grounded theory due to little knowledge that I had about epistemological foundations. I must acknowledge that previously my research direction was not clearly defined and determined. But as I go through the research process, I have encountered new knowledge that has helped to define the direction of my study.

The urge to finish data analysis has led me to explore methodology deeply. Though most of the times confusing, the understanding of methodology has facilitated me to approach this study meaningfully. By being based on a methodological perspective, the research has become directed and focused. I believe this process has taught me to understand my own philosophical stance towards how I perceive reality. Since I personally subscribe to the constructionist worldview, this has led to the

adoption of the constructivist grounded theory. Through this understanding, I realise that my worldview about the world that is shaped by the local cultural, political, historical, and social norms should not be ignored and hence has become part of this research.

4.10 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to present theoretical and methodological assumptions underpinning the current research. This research is situated within a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm based on my personal worldview as a researcher and the nature of the research questions that I explore. The research procedures and methods of this research have been informed by this paradigm. The constructivist viewpoint argues knowledge and reality are resulted and constructed from the human interaction with the world. The constructivist perspective also assumes relativism, the belief of the diverse interpretations of the world. This has influenced the choice of a research topic and the questions of this study which is also compatible with the interpretivist tradition. Consistent with the constructivist paradigm, the research process is further influenced by my presence as a researcher. As such, the knowledge that is produced throughout this research is influenced by my own values and interpretations which will be different from other researchers' knowledge and assumptions.

Based on the constructivist-interpretivist philosophical position, I have entered the social world of my participants to gather in-depth views regarding the extent to which the Islamic cultures have been embedded in the Malaysian society and politics. I draw conclusions from the collected data which have provided interpretations and explanations of 'how' Islamic ideology has been constructed and implemented in

Malaysia. This understanding could offer an interpretation on the importance of Islamic ideology to answer the research questions.

In this chapter, I have also discussed the evolution of grounded theory before acknowledging the adoption of constructivist grounded theory which coincides with the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm. The justification of using abbreviated grounded theory has also been offered to recognise the exclusion of some of the basic elements of grounded theory. In a way, the knowledge of the theoretical position helps me to adopt the type of grounded theory for the current project. Reflexive notes have also been provided towards the end of the chapter to illustrate how some methodological decisions have been made.

The following chapter will provide detailed explanations of the research methods. Among the methods discussed are the participant recruitment, interviewing, the procedures of data collection, approach to data analysis, the use of reflexivity, ethical considerations, and evaluating the rigour of the researcher.

CHAPTER 5: METHOD OF
DATA ANALYSIS

5.0   Introduction

As explicated in Chapter 4, this research uses an abbreviated grounded theory (Willig, 2013) approach or termed as grounded theory-lite (Lear, 2014) following data collection. This research adopts the constructivist grounded theory as proposed by Kathy Charmaz in data analysis to suit with the stance of the present research ontology and epistemology. The research further follows Boeije's (2002) steps of constant comparative analysis, one of the core categories in grounded theory.

This chapter presents the method and approaches that have been used in this investigation; participant selection, semi-structured interview, interviewing, focus group interview, data collection procedure, ethical considerations, data analysis, reflexivity, and research evaluation. Within each section, I provide instances of how the grounded theory method, the constructivist grounded theory methodology, and my theoretical stance have shaped the direction of this thesis.

5.1   Pilot Test

Before the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted in July 2014. Three respondents (i.e.: one from a media sector and the other two from ordinary people) were selected to answer the interview questions to anticipate problems - if any - of the interview protocol. The questions were emailed to participants. One respondent returned his answers with feedbacks while the other two replied via phone calls. In this

instance, conversation mediated by phone was beneficial because it resembles an actual interview since questions could be probed for clarification from the pilot participants. The age of the participants for this pilot study range from 28 to 35.

The result from the pilot test has helped to focus on what questions were appropriate to reach the purpose of this research. For instance, one participant suggested instead of using one issue from the media, I should provide several issues as a point of discussion. This, according to the pilot informant gives more flexibility and help potential participants to identify which particular issue appears important to them. Therefore, participants will not be restricted to discuss only a particular issue.

During actual interviews, besides using the issue of *kalimah* (term) of Allah, I also invited my participants to discuss other issues that were implicated by policies of Islam that triggered their minds. Issues that were brought up instantaneously were crucial in the minds of the participants, thus aided to learn their lived experiences. The pilot test also provides a prompt in which aspect shall I start my research and who should be approached. The pilot participant's interest in discussing government's implementation of Islamic policies has encouraged the selection of a government authority as the first interview informant. The pilot test has further facilitated in refining the interview protocol and checking the terms that are not suitable that could hinder from getting appropriate answers.

5.2   Participant Selection

This study uses a purposive sampling of the non-probability sample. Purposive sampling has been used because it allows the search for participants that would provide either general or specific perspectives as intended by research aims and topic. Wilmot (2005) suggested purposive sampling is appropriate because it emphasises on participants' characteristics as the essential measure to select respondents. In this study, where the aim is to explore the extent to which Islam has been embedded in the social and political sphere of Malaysia, three different groups that are representative of a Malaysian society have been listed out as respondents. They are government authorities who hold positions at the higher office or an authority closely linked to the government, media editors and journalists, and a group of ordinary people. The first two groups were selected based on their role and social status in Malaysian society as suggested by Wilmot (2005). It is believed that the distinctive features of the different groups of respondents would shed different views around the issue under investigation.

This method is in line with the purposive sampling strategy where participants are selected based on their traits "to reflect the diversity and breadth of the sample population", (Wilmot, 2005, p. 3). In grounded theory, theoretical sampling is a form of purposive sampling (Wilmot, 2005). It is vital to provide clarification on the difference between purposeful sampling and theoretical sampling as both terms have been used interchangeably in many types of researches which have invited much criticism. Purposeful sampling refers to the situation where participants are chosen based on the possibility that they would provide rich information central to answer research purposes (Coyne, 1997).

The first interview of this study started with the government authority because they were identified as having information about how Islam has been institutionalised in Malaysia and that they directly engage with the process. This was in line with Glaser's (1978, as cited in Coyne, 1997) advice to begin with "the most knowledgeable people to get a line on relevancies and leads to track down more data and where and how to locate oneself for a rich supply of data", (p. 45). Since Islam has been one of the main political agenda, approaching the government authority is viewed as a promising initial step to explore the research question.

Wilmot (2005) and Coyne (1997) asserted that purposeful sampling is part of the theoretical sampling which is used in the initial stage of sample selection. Coyne (1997) summed up that the initial sample of theoretical sampling involves starting a study "with a sample where the phenomenon occurs" (p. 625); such as by selecting participants who are known to have knowledge regarding the issue being explored. In theoretical sampling, a former data collection and analysis informs who should be sampled next. The chosen samples are said to be theoretical because they are aimed towards theory development. In this instance, data collection and coding should occur at the same time. Therefore, research participants are not determined at the outset of the research unless it is informed by the emerging theory (Glaser and Holton, 2004).

Theoretical sampling is a central tenet of grounded theory. Theoretical sampling was not fulfilled in this examination due to the constraint of time in the fieldwork. I had envisioned that the simultaneous data collection and data analysis would take up longer time. Hence, the data collected have not been analysed immediately during the fieldwork. Given the theoretical sampling procedure has not been strictly adhered, a few

steps have been taken to maintain the research credibility; for example, in order to assist and provide views regarding concepts and categories under development, contacts with existing respondents have been maintained. Several respondents have been referred to check if my understanding resonated with theirs during data analysis. My decision to remain in touch with the existing informants followed Charmaz's (2003 in Williams, 2012) and Pidgeon and Henwood's (1997) suggestion that returning to the same participants is also important than finding new ones as it would assist in distilling the already obtained knowledge. In addition to this, I also approached new people during data analysis to further refine and explore categories under analysis.

Participants for this research have been recruited based on their characteristics (Wilmot, 2005). For example, categories such as "status, role or function in organisation" have been used to draw out research participants (Coyne, 1997, p. 624). Their selection was further based on interviewees' suggestions, also known as snowballing sampling. General reflections have been made on the collected data to decide who should be approached next to cover as wider responses as possible.

This study follows closely steps outlined by Jones and Alony (2011) which is to include participants with minimal differences at a first stage followed by approaching participants with greater differences at a second stage. Borrowing from Glaser (1978), Jones and Alony proposed that categories and properties would be quickly developed through respondents with minimal differences. While to ensure a full development of categories and saturation, respondents with greater differences should be recruited (Jones and Alony, 2011). By maximising differences in respondents' characteristics and social background, data saturation would likely occur (Glaser, 1978, as cited in Jones et

al., 2011). "Saturation was an indication […] to widen the sample to other areas of data collection", (Jones et al., 2011, p 12); that is by moving the selection of participants from government authority to media practitioners and the ordinary people.

For example, at the first stage, two government authorities were approached from the same organisation followed by a few others from a different office. Subsequent to that, media practitioners were interviewed to comment on certain views proposed by the government authorities. The media practitioners' views have been sought based on the nature of their organisations' background. Some media practitioners came from government-owned and independent organisations. The independent media practitioners are usually in the position to either support or criticise government activities because they are not tightly linked to the government. Hence, interviewing them would likely get the additional information necessary to develop codes and categories from the government authority data.

Next, the public has been approached on the assumption that they would provide perspectives from the view of those who are directly affected by the implementation of Islamic policies and cultures. The public participants came from different social backgrounds with most of them working, six are students, and three are Muslims converts which further maximises the varieties of data.

The search for participants also accounted for the multiplicity nature of Malaysia. The categories of media practitioner and ordinary people have been represented by participants from different ethnicities (Malay, Chinese, and Indian). However, the government authority group was represented only by the Malays. It was

difficult to find any other ethnic group working in higher government office partly because government institutions are Malay-dominated. In total, there were 32 individuals (including pilot respondents) recruited during fieldwork and two during data analysis aged between 20 to 62 years old. A different group of respondents was approached to contribute towards multiple opinions which resulted in a "layered" analysis (Charmaz, 2009, cited in Barnett, 2012) which ensuring that all perspectives were considered and included in this research.

In recruiting participants from the government authority, phone calls were made to explain the purpose of the study and to invite their participation. The calls were straightforward for some of them whereby approval was immediately given. As a formality, a letter of invitation together with an information sheet and consent forms were emailed for their references. After a few days, potential respondents were contacted for the second time to confirm their feedback to partake in the study. Several invitations were turned down. Hence, no further email invitation was extended. Five out of ten participants contacted agreed to be interviewed. Those who declined stated that they were not the right person to speak about the issue or were too busy with work.

Two respondents were from an institution which deals with Islamic development called the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM or Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia). The institution works to providing a proper understanding about Islam in Malaysia through publications and open dialogues with non-Muslims. IKIM was the first institution that I approached although I was uncertain as to where the interview would lead me to. I somehow felt convinced that IKIM has some opinions about how Islam has been embedded in Malaysia. The second participant was recruited from

Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Jakim) or Department of Islamic Development Malaysia. Jakim was established with the purpose to mobilise and centralise the development of Muslims in the country. A Senior Federal Council who serves at the Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia (AGC) was another respondent agreed to be interviewed. The last respondent in the government authority category was a pensioner who had worked at the Malaysian National Library as an Assistant Director General.

All respondents showed interest to share their views in relation to the implementation of Islam in Malaysia and regarded the interview as a way to communicate their concerns about a current situation such as the contestation of Islam's special position, the call for equality between all ethnicities, and the importance of maintaining the Malay political power. They also believed that their institutions play important roles to ensure Islam is safeguarded in Malaysia. Most participants in this group expressed the needs to remain steadfast in protecting the religion by holding to the law in the Federal Constitutions. This could be seen through their consistent reference to the Federal Constitution of Malaysia in protecting Islam as a basis of discussions during interviews.

As for the media practitioners, I spoke directly to editors and journalist about my intention to invite them to participate in the present study. Among the media organisations approached included *Harakah*, *News Straits Times*, *Tamil Nesan*, *TV Al-Hijrah*, RTM, and *Bernama*. The same procedures explained above were repeated. Upon obtaining approval, interviews were arranged at their conveniences. These media institutions are government-owned, independent or non-partisan, and opposition-owned

organisations. The mixture of the media respondents has provided an opportunity to capture diversified views about the establishment of Islam in Malaysia.

The general public was approached in the middle of the fieldwork after I perceived a consistent pattern of data about the issue being explored. I maintained the use of purposeful sampling as aforementioned. This led to 19 public respondents in the age range of 19 to 42 representing the diversity of Malaysian society such as Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Iban (an ethnic minority in the East Malaysia). As indicated by Coyne (1997), categories serve as an important initial point to selecting participant in purposeful sampling; and ethnic is also considered as a category. As Malaysia consists of multiple ethnicities, this research has tried to include all ethnicities in order to obtain rich information from various perspectives.

Besides one-to-one interviews, two focus group discussions were conducted. The first group was scheduled in September 2014 approximately in the mid of the fieldwork. To recruit members for the first focus group, I contacted my friend who was a lecturer at a private university in Klang Valley of Malaysia with the intention to interview her students. In approaching respondents from different ethnic backgrounds, I had to go to places where they were more likely to be many of them. I chose the university because of the multi-racial background of its students with 70% non-Malays.

The first focus group which consisted of undergraduate college students were carried out after briefing the research details and obtaining their willingness of participation. All participants have known each other even before the interview was set up. Being amongst their friends was an added advantage because the participants were

comfortable to participate in the group discussion. Hence, I could gather respondents from different ethnicity more readily.

It is important to note that the first focus group was not represented by a Malay respondent because at the time of recruitment there was only one Malay student who was, unfortunately, unwilling to take part. Thus, a discussion that was anticipated between Malays and non-Malays was absent from the focus group. Nevertheless, the information obtained from the group was rich to understand experiences from the views of the Chinese and Indian, which constitute part of the main ethnic groups of the Malaysian population.

The second focus group discussion was conducted in October at the end of the fieldwork. The timing of the second focus group was appropriate since it was conducted to serve the function of 'disconfirming evidence' which will be explored further throughout this chapter. The participants of the second group were recruited through my friend who works in a private sector. With the help of my friend who spread the news about the study that I conduct, I managed to get confirmation from a few people to participate. Upon this confirmation, all related information was emailed to them followed by a proposed date and time for the group discussion. Although the participants for the second group discussion consisted of four people and were relatively small, the plurality of their ethnic background was anticipated to convey different perspectives. Here, the diversity of social background remains as the criteria for the participants' selection. The group was represented by a Chinese, an Indian, a Malay, and an Iban.

Listed below were the number of individual interviews and focus group discussions conducted for the present research project. Both focus groups were conducted among the public informants.

	Interviewees	Ethnicity	Organisation	Gender	Age
1	P001_M	Chinese	Research officer	Male	40
2	P002_F	Malay	Admin staff	Female	25
3	P003_F	Malay	Executive staff	Female	29
4	P004_M	Chinese (Muslim)	Multiracial Reverted Muslims Group President	Male	31
5	P005_M	Chinese (Muslim)	Public university / lecturer	Male	40s
6	P006_F	Malay	Private university / lecturer	Female	39
7	P007_F	Malay	Housewife	Female	40
8	P008_F	Malay	Housewife/teacher	Female	31
9	P009_F	Malay	Social worker	Female	31

Table 1 Total number of individual interviews from the public category

	Interviewees	Ethnicity	Organisation	Gender	Age
1	G001_F	Malay	IKIM	Female	40s
2	G002_M	Malay	IKIM	Male	40s
3	G003_M	Malay	Jakim	Male	50s
4	G004_M	Malay	Senior Federal Council	Male	40s
5	G005_F	Malay	Government Pensioner	Female	62

Table 2 Total number of individual interviews from the government authority category

	Interviewees	Ethnicity	Organisation	Gender	Age
1	M001_M	Indian	Bernama editor	Male	49
2	M002_F	Malay	TV Hijrah producer	Female	29
3	M003_F	Malay	Bernama sub-editor	Female	34
4	M004_F	Chinese	RTM reporter	Female	29
5	M005_M	Malay	Malaysia Kini editor	Male	45
6	M006_M	Malay	Harakah editor	Male	51
7	M007_M	Indian	Tamil Nesan editor	Male	40s

Table 3 Total number of individual interviews from the media practitioner category

Group 1			
	Participant	Ethnicity	Gender
1	PG001_A	Chinese	Male
2	PG001_B	Indian	Female
3	PG001_C	Indian	Female
4	PG001_D	Punjabi	Female
5	PG001_E	Chinese	Female
6	PG001_F	Indian	Female
Group 2			
	Participant	Ethnicity	Gender
1	PG002_R	Iban (Muslim)	Female
2	PG002_D	Indian	Female
3	PG002_C	Chinese	Female
4	PG002_M	Malay	Female

Table 4 Total number of respondents for focus group discussions

5.3 Semi-structured Interview

This study employed a series of semi-structured interview method to explore participants' perceptions and to expand understandings on the embedment of Islamic cultures in Malaysian sphere. Some researchers suggested using an unstructured interview method to complement grounded theory (e.g.; Andrews, Higgins, Andrews, and Lalor, 2012; Patton, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Fielding, 1994). According to Fielding (1994), the use of an unstructured interview is consistent with grounded theory methodology because it serves as a method to discover. Andrews et al., (2012) claimed that a semi-structured interviewing technique restricts the grounded theory approach by forcing the outcome of the emerging theory. In their study, they argued the use of semi-structured questions in the primary study have restricted the theory development where a few concepts were left unexplored. Duffy and Watson (2002) further suggested that the use of a semi-structured interview is more appropriate at a later stage of grounded

theory because an "analysis of the data collected from initial unstructured interviews has indeed given more direction to subsequent semi-structured interviews", (p. 70).

On top of these assertions, this project employs a semi-structured interview method from the beginning of data collection because it serves as a guide during interviews. The semi-structured interview helps to ensure the conversation focuses on specific subjects and provides prompts for respondents (Duffy and Watson, 2002). Although researchers take with them an interview protocol in a semi-structured interview, they are free to pursue any issues they find interesting and worth exploring during interviews as raised by respondents (Rose, 1994; Forrester, 2010). Forrester (2010) maintained that using this approach, researchers are being attentive to participants' views instead of adhering rigidly to a pre-fixed set of question that leads to a direction favoured by researchers only.

A semi-structured interview offers flexibility. Even though I took an interview protocol (Appendix 3) with me during interviews, I did not always adhere to its content nor followed strictly its sequences (Fielding, 1994). The interview protocol has been designed general enough to ensure its flexible use in answering the issue under investigation. I also tried to exercise freedom where respondents could talk any issues that they felt useful to answer my questions. This allowed the respondents to lead the conversations.

The use of an interview protocol further aided focus group discussions in this research. Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2005) added that revising an interview protocol before interviewing helps researchers to be familiar with its

content that assists its flexible use. Fielding (1994) and Duffy and Watson (2002) suggested that the flexibility in the semi-structured approach is compatible with a grounded theory methodology. Therefore, the use of pre-conceived questions would not always inhibit the emergence of a true theory as claimed by Andrews and his colleagues (2012). I also based my decision on several studies which used a semi-structured interview as a method of data collection in their grounded theory study (e.g.: Williams, 2012; Lear, 2014; Brian, 2014).

When I started this examination, I admitted that it was difficult to conduct interviews without referring to a specific guideline; hence, the use of a semi-structured interview protocol was handy to overcome my anxiety. Nonetheless, this apprehension was not persisted throughout the fieldwork. After a few interviews, I felt more confident and questions were posed spontaneously without following the sequence of the interview protocol too rigidly. In several occasions, as I became receptive to my participants' concern, questions were asked to further explore information pointed out by them (Charmaz, 2006), signalling the informants' interest directed at the inquiry. This research has, therefore, improved my interviewing skill.

5.3.1 Interviewing

An interview method was chosen because it offers adaptability in the data collection process. Interviewees' responses can be probed further and respondents' motives and feelings can be investigated more deeply (Cheuk, Liew-Tsonis, Ing, and Razli, 2010) which is not possible through a questionnaire (Bell, 1993). In this investigation, interviews were divided into two phases. In the first phase of the data

collection, interviews were carried out with the government officers and media practitioners using individual interviews. The second phase of the interview involved the public which consisted of two group discussions and seven individual interviews. This approach was useful in looking at patterns of responses obtained from the two groups of the first phase to be probed further in the following interviews. Data in the second phase is an important point of comparison with the data obtained from the first phase interviews.

Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) and Charmaz (2006) are concerned with skills in interviewing. They stressed out the need to establish rapport with interview participants as inadequate trust and comfort would curb the sharing of information that goes beyond a surface level. Roer-Strier and Sands (2015) added that a power relation concept between researcher and participants such as ethnicity, gender, class or religion would further impede respondents' openness to disclose information. As a Malay Muslim interviewer, I was aware of this situation, especially when interviewing respondents from different ethnic and religious background.

Attentive to these concerns, I have tried to position myself in a manner less formal to the participants but remained professional according to the need of research. This was achieved by explaining to them how valuable their experiences and views have been to this study. I also reminded all interview participants that there are no right and wrong answers to questions that were posed during interviews and that I valued our differences and uniqueness. As religion has been a sensitive issue in Malaysia, I selected several issues in the Malaysian media as an initial topic in an effort to invite participants to discuss the matter further. In so doing, I particularly picked up issues that involved

different ethnicities. Through this approach, I could capture participants' interpretations of their experiences. This was also done to tell them that I was open to any views that might or might not be sensitive to Muslims or Malays.

An in-depth qualitative interview was adopted with the aim to explore rather than to interrogate the experiences of the research participants. Consistent with this aim, Charmaz's (2001) emphasis on ensuring questions to "be sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences as well as narrow enough to elicit and explore the participant's specific experience" (p. 679) had proved to be an important guide. In relation to this, general questions were used in the first three sections of an interview protocol of this research. In the last section of my interview protocol, specific questions were posed to tap interviewees' experiences, particularly in government authority's and media practitioner's categories.

Interviewing requires an ability to recognise if informants have satisfactorily fulfilled the purpose of the questions (Mack, et al., 2005). If additional information is needed, a researcher should be able to investigate further. In reference to this, I asked follow-up questions in an attempt to encourage respondents to provide elaboration using prompts such as 'what do you mean by...', 'how did you describe...', 'can you provide an example on...'. These questions would facilitate to gather rich information on thoughts, feelings, and actions. These concerns are addressed in detailed by Charmaz (2001; 2006).

Mack (2010) suggested "research can never be objectively observed from the outside rather it must be observed from inside through the direct experience of the

people" (p. 8). By undertaking in-depth interviews, this research explains and recognises the social and cultural settings that shape respondents' interpretation about the world. This is also in line with interpretivist thinking that concerns with understanding the meaning of socially constructed knowledge. Charmaz (2006) aptly summed up "the in-depth nature of an intensive interview fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of his or her experience... and, thus, is a useful method for interpretive inquiry", (p. 25). Corresponding with Charmaz (2006), my interviews were directed towards finding processes and actions as suggested by the constructivist grounded theory.

Silverman (2000) offered two ways of making use of interview data. The first maintains responses given by interviewees work to explain external realities such as events or internal understanding such as feelings; the second offers stories or narratives from interview data which contain an explanation about the respondents' world. He further argued that the latter sees the potential of "the culturally rich methods through which interviewers and interviewees, in concert, generate plausible accounts of the world" (p. 123). On this notion, the subjectivity of interviewees, as well as researchers, is both important. These statements suggest that the chosen interview method is, indeed, compatible with the theoretical perspective of the present research.

5.3.2   Focus group discussions

Besides one-to-one interviews, a focus group interview technique was also used in the data collection. A focus group technique allows several participants to be gathered in a social context at the same time (Frey and Montana, 1991). I had foreseen the advantage of being able to save more time and get more views through a group

discussion. Among the main rationale for adopting this approach is its potential in providing an image of how the issue under investigation affects a community (Mack et al., 2005). Parallel to this, participants in focus group discussions were selected with the aim to offer a portrayal of how the construction and the embedment of Islam in Malaysia have affected them.

Charmaz's (2006) argument that the process of interaction inherent in group discussions led towards the discovery of multiple realities was another reason for adopting this approach. People are likely to express different opinions due to their different views and experiences (Mack et al., 2005). For this reason, I took up a focus group method on the basis that "focus group could provide the type of stimulating, interactive, and creative environment necessary for interaction between the researcher and the participants to understand the meaning of the experiences shared in the process", (Wilson, 2012, p. 7).

Bertrand and Hughes (2005) asserted that a focus group discussion has been used to find out how participants' feelings and opinions can be shaped by the experience of discussing the subject with others. This would yield the best information under a cooperative environment among respondents (Creswell, 2007), especially when respondents have known each other before the group discussions take place. By knowing each other, the less talkative respondents will be encouraged to voice out their views. It has been observed that participants felt comfortable during group discussions which resembled more of a natural conversational style.

The present study explored how interviewees perceive the embedment of Islamic cultures in Malaysia and how they respond to each other's views. Mack et al. (2005) claimed that data richness in a focus group could be achieved through "the group dynamic" and "the diversity of the group", (p. 52). The focus group dynamic was enhanced and could be seen through the energy that was displayed by each respondent when discussing issues. The diversity of the focus group is represented through the different ethnic and religious background of the participants. Eagerness to participate contributed to data richness. In both focus group discussions, all participants provided their individual opinion, albeit there were occasions they related their responses with one another.

Although focus group participants were being up front, in a controlled manner, when stating disagreement towards others' opinions, the fact that some people might have been influenced by the group opinion should not be denied. The first group participants, for example, seemed to agree on most issues. Focus group discussions were, therefore, used to explore how group interaction articulates, censures, justifies, negates, supports, and influences opinions and accounts of each other to reach their shared or contested judgments (Mack et al., 2005). The use of focus group discussion is also compatible with the constructivist view that realities are not fixed because they result from the present co-construction between actors and researchers.

A further important aspect of using focus group discussion is its potential in providing a cross-check of participants' data obtained from individual interviews which were conducted in the first phase data collection. Frey and Fontana (1991, p. 178) stated:

Group interview would […] complement any other method being used. It would, on one side, "triangulate" the data of formal methodological techniques […]; it would, on the other hand, with the cross-referenced multiple opinions stemming from its group nature, lend methodological rigor to the one-on-one interpretive nature of field interviews.

Morrow (2005) discouraged the use of the terminology 'triangulate' which according to him borrowed from the quantitative paradigm. Having the same opinion, I avoid the use of this term and refer to 'disconfirming evidence' or 'negative cases' instead.

To a certain extent, the focus group discussions with ordinary people have served to explore contestation to views shared by the government authority and media practitioners. By adding multiple data sources through ordinary people and focus group, "the interpretive status of the evidence" found in individual interviewing would be enhanced (Morrow, 2005, p. 256). I consider this strategy as a 'disconfirming evidence' methodology, a process through which the preliminary codes and categories from the first two groups of respondents were checked against responses obtained from the focus group discussions (Creswell and Miller, 2000). The results would either confirm or disconfirm the preliminary codes and categories. This approach is consistent with a constructivist approach which "relies on examining all of the multiple perspectives on a theme or category", (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 127).

This approach is seen similar to finding 'negative cases' in grounded theory. Charmaz (2006) argued that "the logic of negative cases assumes asking whether the data include individuals, situations, or themes that do not fit [existing] analysis" with the aim towards developing codes and categories (p. 102). Although data was not analysed

in conjunction with the data collection, negative cases analysis could still be performed within data (Willig, 2013); that was by searching for unfitting categories or views in existing data. The search for disconfirming evidence or negative cases is encouraged to move beyond finding confirmation in data (Morrow, 2005), thus increasing the depth and the breadth of collected data ensuring the categories are comprehensively explored.

In the focus group discussions, I was aware that control needs to be taken to ensure no one dominates. This was done by encouraging all respondents to participate equally in interviews. As the interviews went on, each speaker was assigned with specific alphabets in my notebook to be paired with taped discussions. This measure has eased the transcribing process. In every interview, observations on body language, gestures, comments, and when more than one person is speaking were noted because that could also imply certain meaning. For example, in the first group discussion, one respondent answered vaguely using 'hurmm' phrase and nodded his head. I asked him to elaborate further because the response might mean both agree or disagree with previous respondent's view (Mack et al., 2005). By asking for clarification, I helped my respondent to articulate his meaning (Charmaz, 2006). In sum, the framework that I have undertaken in data collection is illustrated below:

```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Stage 1: Pre-field │
                    │  work - compiling   │
                    │ potential respondents│
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Stage: Pilot Test  │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Stage 3: Field work │
                    │ – establishing      │
                    │   relationship      │
                    └─────────────────────┘
```

┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Stage 4: Interviews │ ──▶ │ Stage 5: Interviews │ ──▶ │ Stage 6: Interviews │
│ with Government   │   │ with media   │   │ with ordinary people │
│ authority   │ ◀── │ practitioners   │   │   │
└──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ Stage 8: Data   │ ◀── │ Stage 7: Finding disconfirming│
│ verification – within│   │ or negative evidences in data │
│ data and across   │   │ analysis – Focus group   │
│ participants   │   │ interview   │
└──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────────────┘

```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Stage 9: Data      │
                    │  Saturation         │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Stage 10: Development│
                    │ of Key Categories / │
                    │ concepts            │
                    └─────────────────────┘
```

Figure 2 Framework for data collection adapted from Ahmad (2009).

5.4 Data Collection Procedures

Before the interviewing sessions, few steps were taken to ensure research ethic was well-preserved and that respondent' participations were voluntary. For example, all interviews were arranged at the convenience of the research participants. Interviews with government authorities were conducted at their respective offices except for one interview which was carried out after an office hour. The same procedure was applied when interviewing media editors and journalist where offices were the interviewing place. This has eased them and saved my time too. As for the general public respondents, five interviews were carried out at their house, two in their offices, and two in a closed-door restaurant after peak hours. The time and places were chosen considering our safety and appropriate atmosphere such as avoiding peak hours that might be too noisy especially in the restaurant. Conducted interviews at respondents' respective chosen place were important to preserve the natural setting that they feel comfortable with.

To further resemble the everyday setting, light conversations with the research participants were done prior to each interview followed by a briefing on the information sheet. The respondents were free to ask any questions related to this research. Informed consents from the respondents were obtained after confirming their willingness to participate. As an opening to each interview session, some basic demographic details were taken for a research record. At the end of each interview, points recorded in the field note were read in front of the respondents to reflect whether they agreed with the notes taken. I also invited the participants to recap their own views to ensure they were

consistent with my field note. By doing this, I could check the accuracy of information provided and allowed participants to add any views that they thought vital.

The Interviews were conducted from August-October 2014 which involved a face-to-face individual interview and focus group discussion approaches. All interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 90 minutes and each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. After every interview was transcribed, the transcripts were re-checked against tape recording twice and coded using an abbreviated grounded theory as discussed in Chapter 4.

5.5   Ethical Considerations

According to Punch (1998) participants' lives could be encroached in qualitative research approaches. This could contribute to "the in-depth, unstructured nature of qualitative research and the fact that it raises issues that are not always anticipated", (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 66). For these reasons, it is the responsibility of all researchers to consider ethical related issues when conducting a research; "even when research participants are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics", (Neuman, 2011, p. 143). This part discusses several ethical concerns that have been considered before and during this project; informed consent, confidentiality of information, right to withdraw, and participants' anonymity.

Before agreeing to take part in the study, adequate information was given to the potential participants using an information sheet (Appendix 1). The information sheet details out the aims of the research, the expected benefits and risks to the participants,

the planning of the interviews, and the use of the emerging data in the thesis. Participants were also reminded of the use of tape recorders. This matter was addressed every time an invitation to participate in an interview was made and before each interviewing session. The consent of each respondent was obtained through email, which usually stated they were willing to take part in interviews, and before interviews started.

Since the participation is voluntary, participants could withdraw from interviews at any time without the need to state any reasons. I expressed this matter even after interview sessions had ended to ensure that their right has been preserved throughout this study.

In addition to this, the right of confidentiality over information provided was also addressed before each interview. Participants' privacy and confidentiality are important. Mack et al. (2005) asserted that the issue of confidentiality is vital to gain trust from participants to attain good data. In practice, during one-to-one interviewing sessions, I have assured my participants that all information obtained from them would not be revealed to other participants. However, they were informed that some of the interview extracts would be anonymously used in the final thesis report. The same procedure has been applied in the focus group discussions that participants were requested to keep confidential all information shared during group discussions in an effort to encourage everybody to respect each other's anonymity (Mack et al., 2005; Smith, 2008). However, participants in group interviews were reminded before and after each session that it was beyond the ability of this research to prevent participants from disclosing matters discussed in the focus group interview (Mack, et al., 2005). Hence,

they were aware of this issue and could decide whether or not to continue their participation.

This study further protects the anonymity of all participants. Forrester (2010) advised that the participants should be anonymised at the beginning of the research. In doing so, interviewees' names were assigned with pseudonyms throughout the research process such as in the interview records and research report. During each group interview, whenever they spoke they were assigned with written pseudonyms in my field note. The participants were also anonymised by using the same pseudonyms in the field note to ensure consistency in the interview transcripts and when their responses were quoted in the finding chapters. However, respondents were identified to which group they belong – such as government authority, media practitioners, or general public – to recognise 'who says what' with the purpose to make a distinction between groups and to determine whether different groups have different views on the phenomenon under study. To further preserve the confidentiality of information and anonymity of all respondents, all interviews were transcribed by me as the researcher and no one had any access to their original records except after being anonymised.

5.6   Data Analysis

The methods employed in data analysis are detailed out in this section. Before being analysed using a grounded theory method, participants' transcripts have been studied carefully. Grounded theory involves an iterative process where data collection and data analysis should occur concurrently towards theory development. The approach is, therefore, not a one-way process since data are collected as analyses are ongoing. In

this research, data were analysed only after data collection was concluded. Though, at the end of each interview, I listened to each recorded interview and made brief reflections before the next interview session.

Charmaz (2006) urged a flexible use of grounded theory methods. Charmaz (2000, p. 514) explained "grounded theory methods specify analytic strategies" without having to adhere to a specific method of data collection. She further suggested that grounded theory procedures can be used with different types of data collection. In this investigation, there are different sources of data that have been used to assist in data analysis; interviews with three different categories of respondents, focus group discussions, memos, and reflexivity. Due to this, I coded and interpreted my interview data using grounded theory analytical strategies from the perspective of Charmaz (2006).

5.7   Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

This study uses NVivo software for managing textual data throughout data analysis. There are several reasons that urge the use of this software. Before I decided to use NVivo, I tried to code manually using Microsoft Excel. As this method gave a little help, I changed to cutting and pasting codes on pieces of paper. However, the process was slowed down as I had to prepare a few copies of the same transcript when the same excerpts were to be coded under different codes. These challenges led me to NVivo. After watching several tutorials, NVivo seems to provide a handle on the large volume of data. I decided to use this software above other available range such as Atlas.ti or NUD.IST because it was advised by my supervisor and recommended by a friend who

has been using it for a while. The package could be described as simpler and less cluttered as compared to other software. Though, practice and training are needed for the software to be effectively utilised.

NVivo offers multiple functions that allow researchers to do their work in one place. To fully utilise the software, researchers need to really grasp the knowledge of the software first hand. Short courses are available to help users become proficient in employing the package; hence, NVivo has been explored and learned for the qualitative data analysis of this study. I attended two NVivo courses; before and towards the end of the data analysis. Before being sure to adopt NVivo, I had also attended short courses of Atlas.ti.

In the examination of data, all interview transcripts were imported to Nvivo (See Appendix 6a). NVivo offers a function that could store attributes of each respondent. Participants' demographic information such as age, ethnicity, and gender has been recorded using this function. Such a function is useful in analytical procedures of this study (Hutchison, Johnston, and Breckon, 2010). For example, "attributes provided an easy way of differentiating between cases (cases in NVivo refers to a respondent) based on known characteristics. Consequently, if a concept behaved differently for different cases then attribute information often provided some early insight into this", (Hutchison et al., 2010, p. 289). For example, the attribute of ethnicity has been used to differentiate between those who viewed the implementation of Islamic policies positively and negatively. The Malay ethnic group has been associated to agree with most of the Islamic policies, while the minority group, the Chinese particularly, perceived Islamic policies have curtailed their freedom.

In NVivo, the process of coding could be done through a function called 'nodes' which is a better alternative to manual coding. Excerpts from respondents' transcripts could be directly coded using this function. The retrieval process of the coded items is also simple. By clicking on the created codes under the nodes function, all coded excerpts will be listed out in a specific pane in NVivo (see Appendix 6b). In addition, during analysis, code lists could be displayed in coding stripes in the margin of the document which allows glances at created nodes. It is also possible to make a memo and create links to related texts or document, hence no new word document is needed.

The 'search' facility in NVivo for data interrogation has added rigor to this study. For example, to ensure that every occasion where the term 'prayer' and 'ritual' have been checked in the data corpus, the 'search' facility could be useful. The search facility would display all occasions in each transcript where these terms appear in a new pane. This would minimise the possibility of overlooking these terms from analysis and yield more reliable results.

In addition to keeping my research project in NVivo, I have made copies of them in several places from time to time as a safety measure should NVivo fails. I have utilised NVivo's function from initial coding to focused coding. This has facilitated to analytically arrange and refine the codes created. NVivo has proven to be easier to the organisation and movements of codes as compared to working manually. It is appropriate to suggest that using NVivo software in a qualitative study has assisted in ensuring the systematic analysis of my data.

Another reason for adopting NVivo software is because it provides clarity in

data analysis process. Qualitative research has been criticised for not being clear in illustrating how researchers analyse data. Due to this, qualitative research has been frequently alleged for not being thorough in research practices. By employing NVivo in assisting the data analysis process, this problem has been addressed. The use of this software has allowed data to be analysed transparently (Welsh, 2002). The process of data analysis will be elaborated throughout this chapter accompanied by illustrations as attached in appendices at the end of the thesis.

5.8   Basic Principles of Grounded Theory

Charmaz (2006) offered a guideline in grounded theory to analyse data in qualitative research. There are five tools of constructivist grounded theory: 1) simultaneous data collection and data analysis, 2) theoretical sampling, 3) data coding, 4) constant comparative analysis, and 5) memo writing.

Due to time constraint, an abbreviated approach to grounded theory has been used with the main emphasis on coding procedures, constant comparative analysis, and memo writing while "theoretical sensitivity, theoretical saturation, and negative case [have only been used] within the texts that are being analysed", (Willig, 2013, p. 73). Borrowing from Pidgeon and Henwood (1997; p. 255), Willig further reminded in whatever situation, grounded theory provides "ways of putting into practice the requirement to actively engage in close and detailed analysis of" research data which could "stimulate and discipline the theoretical imagination".

The decision to take up a grounded theory method became clear only at the end of the data collection as I was struggling to find a proper approach to analyse my data. The grounded theory method has been applied to guiding data analysis since it provides comprehensive procedures. Charmaz's grounded theory guidelines provide an important framework for exploring people's perception and understanding of issues related to Islamic cultures in Malaysia. The steps undertaken in the data analysis of this study comprised 1) reading, re-reading of and preparing an individual transcript into meaning unit; 2) initial line-by-line, sentence-by-sentence coding of an individual transcript; 3) focused coding in an individual transcript and between transcripts; 4) memo-writing throughout analysis process; 5) constant comparative analysis throughout analysis process; 6) writing the first draft.

5.8.1 Constant comparative analysis

One of the important features of grounded theory strategy is the use of a constant comparative analysis which should begin as early as coding starts. Besides referring to Charmaz, I adopted a constant comparative approach as described by Boeije (2002) since he provides a clear explanation of its application. In exploring this approach, I referred to a myriad of research to understand how to apply the method.

Glaser and Strauss asserted that a constant comparative approach to coding is an integral property in grounded theory analytic strategy (Walker and Myrick, 2006). This method is also core to other traditions of qualitative research (Boeije, 2002). Its procedure entails iterative coding in a back and forth movement comparing codes, categories, and sub-categories to find similarity and differences. Evaluation in the

166

constant comparative analysis would serve as verification of emerging categories if consistently employed (Walker and Myrick, 2006; Holton, 2010).

The constant comparative method has been used by several researchers without committing to grounded theory (e.g. Hewitt-Taylor, 2001; Fram, 2013). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, as cited by Charmaz, 2006), a constant comparative method is used "to establish analytic distinctions – and thus make comparisons at each level of analytic work", (p. 54). The technique used in this process is constantly questioning data to reinforce theoretical sensitivity during analysis.

Adopted from Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Holton (2007), Evans (2013) detailed out that "the constant comparative process involves three types of comparisons: 1) incident to incident for the emergence of concepts, 2) concepts to more incidents for further theoretical elaboration, saturation, and densification of concepts, and 3) concepts to concepts for their emergent theoretical integration and through theoretical coding". Generation of a theory would be more systematic using constant comparison in the coding analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 as cited in Jones and Alony, 2011).

One of the important principles of a constant comparison is that it should be intertwined with theoretical sampling (Boeije, 2002; Holton, 2010). As codes being constantly compared, researchers will find more information is needed and more samples should be collected hence, theoretical sampling takes place. In theoretical sampling, initial coding directs researchers to the subsequent data collection by proposing what and where to collect data. Through this approach, "new data are confirmed and disconfirmed to ensure the emerging theory develops rigor and

parsimony", (Jones and Alony, 2011, p. 12). Besides verifying and adding depths to categories found during coding, theoretical sampling should also be used to look at 'negative cases' or instances that do not fit to ensure the breadth and complexity of an emerging theory is fully explored (Willig, 2013). Since theoretical sampling did not take place in this research, I have employed constant comparative analysis in all stages of data analysis to verify and add depths to categories explored in the data at hand and to find negative cases and disconfirming evidence.

Boeije (2002) discussed in detail his experience of using constant comparative analysis. He contended that the internal validity of research findings would be enhanced through a constant comparative examination of data. This could be achieved by consistently looking for similarities and discrepancies in the gathered data in an effort to conceptualise arrays that exist within the subject under investigation. Based on his study, Boeije (2002) suggested five steps of constant comparison namely "[the] comparison within a single interview, [the] comparison between interviews within the same group, comparison of interviews from different groups, [the] comparison in pairs at the level of the couple, and comparing couples" (p. 395). I adopted the first, second, and third types of comparison since this study did not involve couples. Comparison within a single interview was done each time a new interview transcript was coded. At the same time, all interview transcripts within each group of respondents were compared with each other. The third step was the most important aspect as the result offered a comparison of the perspectives of different groups. This comparison suggested how government authority, media practitioners, and ordinary people differ or coincide in their experiences regarding the constructions of Islam.

168

A constant comparative approach was employed as early as coding the first transcript (Boeije, 2002). Its application was also consistent to explore data variations comprehensively (Willig, 2013). In doing so, three types of comparison were conducted. First I compared incidents between incidents when I developed initial codes. This was done to ensure all coded items really fit under the initial codes. Next, I compared codes between codes to develop a tentative category. And lastly, incidents were compared against tentative category especially at the level of focused coding to confirm the incidents satisfy the meaning of the category.

In exercising constant comparison, researchers could return to earlier data to revise their codes. I repeatedly referred to previously coded items to influence subsequent analysis and my data coding (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). Therefore, the subsequent coding was directly influenced by the codes generated from previous data; an approach to remain grounded in the data. At the end of the study, I realised that the constant comparative analysis is the heart of the grounded theory because it has mobilised my data analysis in a structured direction.

It was observed that participants in the first focus group discussion seemed to develop a common understanding and perception. After I reviewed and coded the group discussion's transcript, I noticed that the respondent had discussed how the practice of Islam has upset them in many ways, such as leading to the feeling of marginalisation. This provided me with negative cases as opposed to positive views regarding the implementation of Islamic policies as spoken by government authorities. The coding has noted that the informants in the first group talked about the matter in detail, which added depth to coded categories. This might have been contributed by the fact that the

participants in the first group were dominated by Chinese and Indians. I predicted, had the Malays or Muslims been in the group, the discussion would have focused in a quite different direction. This has been demonstrated in the second focus group discussion where the variation of opinions was coded since both Muslims and non-Muslim informants were present.

5.8.2 Coding

Coding serves the purpose to explore data patterns (McCann and Clarke, 2003). There are two phases of coding in grounded theory according to Kathy Charmaz which have been adopted in this research; the initial coding and the focused coding. The initial coding involves the line-by-line close examination of data which aims towards conceptualising ideas; while the focused coding or selective coding begins when the most regularly occurring codes are selected and organised for further theoretical development (Charmaz, 2006).

Coding is a process of labelling each segment of data to provide meanings and to assist a researcher to compare between them (Charmaz, 2006). Coding requires the chunking of data into smaller units such as words, sentences, paragraphs, or sections before codes could be assigned. In grounded theory, coding usually provides a summary in a word or a short sentence to a fragment of a transcript (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick, 2008) which is generated inductively as opposed to pre-determined by previous literature that aims for a theory or hypothesis testing (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001).

Charmaz (2012) advised codes should be reflective of the aim of a study and its research question. The kind of questions I asked during data analysis has influenced the codes generated. Since the interest of this study is to explore the extent to which Islamic cultures have been embedded in Malaysia, my questions have been directed towards uncovering informants' specific experiences with regard to the practice of Islam and the implementation of Islamic policies. This question was asked because it provided the means to explore how Islam has been perceived not only from Muslims' view but also non-Muslims; as well as from authority-defined as opposed to everyday-defined view (Shamsul, 1996).

In constructivist grounded theory, researchers should code for processes, actions, and meaning because this would assist in finding associations between data and discovering major issues (Charmaz, 1990; 2012). Coding for actions in data encourages researchers to find processes. Charmaz (2012), Breckenridge, Jones, Elliot, and Nicol (2012), and Creswell (2007) viewed that researchers should be active and interactive when coding and interpreting participants' meaning. In this regard, I interpreted my participants' thoughts, feelings, and views during coding by focusing on gerund-based phrases or active words in an effort to find processes.

Being analytic is one of the strategies in grounded theory. Corbin and Strauss (2015) proposed two types of analytical strategies: "the making of comparisons and the asking of questions" on data while coding (p. 90). Charmaz consistently urged to be analytical in data coding. She suggested codes become category after their meanings are defined and properties are specified analytically (Charmaz, 1990). Charmaz (1990) further discussed ways to raise a code into a conceptual category, in which a "researcher

171

specifies its properties, notes the conditions under which it arises, relates how it changes, describes its consequences, and ultimately, specifies its relationship to the other conceptual categories" (p. 1168). By being analytical at all level of coding, researchers could ensure categories that are developed from the data are conceptually related. In one sentence, coding involves a process of asking analytical questions on interview responses, comparing between segments of data using constant comparative analysis, deriving codes directly from data, exploring and defining properties of codes, making connections between codes analytically, and engaging in an active interaction with the data.

The **first step** of the research analysis was the process of transcribing all interviews and familiarising the content of the transcripts through a first reading. The initial reading of the transcripts is important to provide "a sense of direction" where coding should start (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, p. 87). Each transcript was prepared by chunking them into meaning units or segments of data to ease coding. Following these, the two phases of coding as suggested by Charmaz were carried out; initial coding and focused coding. In data analysis, a codebook was developed and a directory that contains a list of processes was created in NVivo. Memos were used to develop analytical accounts on codes that were assigned to data segments. The discussions on codes that seem to hold explanations to the issue under scrutiny were noted in memos. These methods will be explicated in the next section.

5.8.3   Open / initial coding

The first level of coding is called open coding and was the initial step taken in generating codes from participants' transcripts. Also known as the first cycle method (Saldana, 2009), researchers look for ideas or issues in data (Charmaz, 1983) to avoid from imposing preconceived ideas on them (Charmaz, 2006, p. 51). To begin the open coding, Charmaz (1990) emphasised on using line-by-line coding to help researchers engage closely and actively with data. Charmaz reminded to be analytical and theoretical from the beginning of data analysis. She suggested asking what is happening and what actions can be derived from the data in order to achieve this (Charmaz, 2000). These questions direct researchers to look for processes. When I first attempted to conduct an open coding, I felt unsure whether I did it correctly. Corbin and Strauss (2015) and Oktay (2012), however, reminded that there is no right or wrong way of coding because different coders are expected to practice it differently.

During an open coding, it is advisable for researchers to remain open to allow the emergence of as much codes as possible. Beside line-by-line coding, labels or codes were also assigned to sentences, paragraphs or sections in each transcript to summarise codes' meanings. There is no strict procedure to stick to line-by-line coding throughout data analysis. However, doing so would help to focus on contents of the interview responses. Line-by-line coding avoids the likelihood of missing an important category and ensures categories to be verified and saturated (Holton, 2010). Charmaz (1990) contended by being committed to line-by-line coding, a researcher avoids what she or he termed as "theoretical flights of fancy which have little connection to the data", (p. 1168). Due to this, I tried to remain steadfast in employing step by step, line-by-line

coding throughout data analysis of each transcript. There were times I coded small chunks of data when little meaning could be derived from line-by-line coding. This was helpful especially to describe respondents' experiences on certain events. The initial, open coding was the **second step** taken during data analysis.

The process of coding was slow at the early stage of coding. However, the process was gradually sped up as I begun to see some important views in data. I also tried to use respondents' words as much as possible to generate codes or termed as in-vivo codes. This, I believe has helped to define their experiences from their own words. All the initial coding was conducted in NVivo in a codebook. An inventory of codes with their descriptions was readily linked to each segment of data. This means, every time a label was assigned to a certain segment of data, it will be directly created in an inventory using 'nodes' function. Hence, the open code was directly linked to respondents' data.

Following the initial coding, a lot of descriptive codes were produced. To ensure the consistency of initial codes, the constant comparative analysis was used to compare coded sections of data with other segments of data under similar initial codes. This was done to ensure all coded data segments adhered to the meaning of the initial codes. Every time I finished coding each transcript, I tried to identify what were the major processes that might require an attention in subsequent coding. To identify the major processes, I referred to the most recurring codes as well as codes that seemed significant to the research question. These were recorded in a memo. The record was useful in the comparative work of a constant comparison because it contains notes on codes or emerging categories that require further consideration.

174

Line-by-line coding in initial coding allows the immersion in data and looking at the data from an insider's view (Wilson, 2012). This helps to move towards understanding the content and exploring the data in depth to discover initial codes and to explore tentative categories. Next, the initial codes or tentative categories were carried in my mind to assist and influence subsequent data coding. By doing so, focused coding had already taken its place in some transcripts before initial coding started in other transcripts. At this stage, the constant comparative analysis was used to find evidence in subsequent data that were missing in former data.

From this explication, the first level of coding requires a close examination of data with the purpose to provide descriptive codes which would assist the generation of categories in the second level of coding. As mentioned previously, Charmaz reminded to be consistently critical in coding. There were times I felt the coding task was demanding because I worried that I might stray from the way appropriate to grounded theory. To overcome this uncertainty, I referred to the key questions proposed by Charmaz (2006, p. 51) when coding my data: "What process is at issue here? How can I define it? What are the consequences of the process? How does each participant act while involved in this process? When, why, and how does the process change?".

The coding process has impelled the reflection on issues coded in new ways. Instead of accepting their view as they expressed, Charmaz's key questions helped to challenge some taken for granted, hidden assumptions which I held. One example of this was about non-*bumiputra*'s view regarding Islam. I always assumed they have very little knowledge about Islam. Rather it appeared that they, though not all, have a good understanding of Islam and could explain what is and what is not compulsory for

Muslims. They also held the view that all religions are similar in preaching good things that it is people who misuse religion for their selfish purposes. Initially, I had not expected to hear their positive view about religion. In a way, I have gained a new insight not to underestimate their awareness about religion. The example of an initial coding is illustrated in Appendix 6c.

5.8.4 Focused coding

Focused coding or selective coding is the second level of coding in constructivist grounded theory. According to Saldana (2009), focused coding refers to the "advanced ways of reorganising and reanalysing data coded through first cycle methods", (p. 149). It is a process of reviewing coded data and gathering them under a broad tentative category. Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, and Blinkhorn (2011) defined focused coding as pursuing "a selected set of central codes throughout the entire data set and the study" (p. 5). Focused coding, requires a decision on which codes to pursue using several criteria. Among the criteria used to guide the focused coding of my research were by looking at the frequency of the codes occurrence and codes that were seen relevant or important to reflect my research question (Charmaz, 2006; Brian 2014).

In the **third step**, that is the focused coding, I combined and categorised a larger amount of different codes which were previously fragmented in the open coding. I also referred to the directory of processes which were developed during the first stage of coding to choose which to pursue. Using NVivo, all codes were sorted and arranged, a multiple of times, until they appeared to fit under initial categories. Before arriving at this stage, codes under each tentative category were checked against participants'

176

transcripts which were readily retrieved from the NVivo. This process allows the segment of data to be checked against other segment of data to see if they really fit under the same category and to ensure the segments coded adhere the definition of the initial category. NVivo's 'property' function further permits the definition of each code and category by right-clicking a selected code.

Constant comparison was faithfully employed during this process with the aim to develop and refine the properties of each focused code or category. "Through repeated comparisons, the investigator is able to revise key assertions or categories until they accurately reflect the experiences of participants" and uncover its complexities (Morrow, 20005, p. 256). In the first transcript, for example, codes under an emerging category were compared to find similarities and differences. "Having identified a common feature that unite[s] instances of a phenomenon" I shifted my attention to addressing differences within a tentative category to explore any emerging properties or subcategories (Willig, 2013, p. 71). This, according to Corbin and Strauss (2015), would "bring out different aspects of the same phenomenon", (p. 94) which is also termed as negative cases or disconfirmed evidence (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Morrow, 2005; Ford, 2010). By addressing the disconfirming evidence, researchers will be led to more encounter (Oktay, 2012).

It was during this process that some codes were subsumed under different categories, renamed, or removed. The process of the emergence of codes into a tentative category was illustrated in Figure 3 below. I have also been reminded to establish "connecting links between data and reflecting on" them (Gorra and Kornilaki, 2010, p) throughout the process. At this level of coding, I tried to identify which categories

177

seemed significant to my research question and tried making connections between them. I also maintained memos to spell out theoretical ideas that I have about codes and categories being analysed. The example of focused coding could be seen in Appendix 6d.

Different aspects found in the codes were explored and broken down into units that formed as subcategories of the tentative category

| Code 1 |
| Code 2 | → | Tentative category |
| Code 3 |

Subcategory 1

Subcategory 2

Similar codes were combined into a tentative category
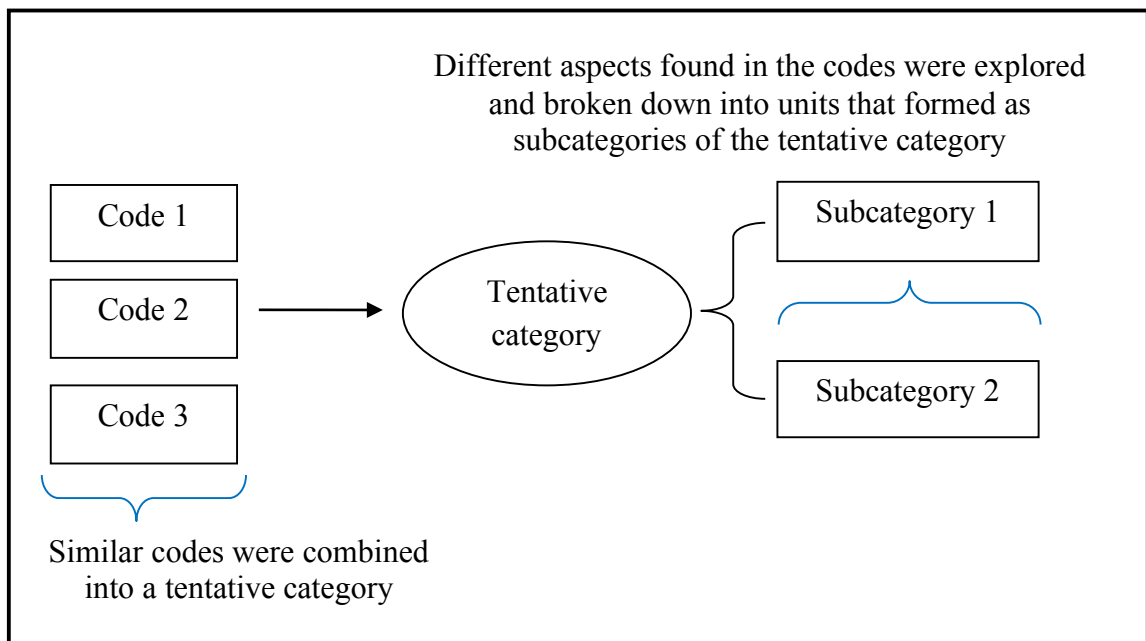
Figure 3 An illustration of the process of the emergence of codes into tentative category

5.8.5 Memo Writing

Memo writing is also an important analytical process in grounded theory. The memo is a written note which involves the process of theorising and commenting about codes and categories as research progresses. It is about making notes on what is puzzling or surprising about interview responses (Gibbs, 2002). Holton (2010) proposed that the use of memo is useful to highlight the ongoing reflections of substantive and

theoretical codes and categories during analysis. Memoing is useful to analyse and question the taken for granted aspects of data and research process (Charmaz, 1990, as cited in McCann and Clark, 2003). Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggested several types of memos known as observation notes, methodological notes, theoretical notes, and personal notes. A memo would help researchers to work systematically in an organised way during analysis as it captures the researchers' thought processes that are essential towards emerging theoretical explanation.

In this research, memo writing has been used to facilitate data analysis. Anything related to the analysis processes such as definitions of codes or categories, relationships between categories, initial assumptions, and theoretical reflections have been recorded in a memo (See Appendix 6e). At this stage, I have become analytical towards my interview data. Analytic memoing serves as an invaluable source in theoretical coding, the last stage of coding towards theory development, as it provides reflections on relationships between categories (Urquhart, Lehmann, and Myers, 2010). A good memo should include date, heading, and state which sections of data they were written for so that they would be traceable when needed. Memos have been used to document my thoughts about the research process since it assists the refinement and development of codes into categories.

I wrote analytical memos in every phase of coding. All observation and ideas occurred during coding were noted down in my memos. This corresponds with Charmaz's (2006) constructivist approach which suggested researchers' ideas serve as a checklist to other data although they may not reflect the data at hand. Charmaz stressed "to avoid assuming that respondents, for example, repress or deny significant 'facts'

about their lives. Instead look for how they understand their situations before judg[ing] their attitudes and actions through your own assumptions", (p. 54).

5.8.6   Refining and defining categories

All categories developed from all transcripts were rearranged for further refinement. At this phase, all codes regardless of which groups they belong to were combined under specific categories and sub-categories. Every repetitive code from different groups was either wiped out or merged into same categories.

The refinement of categories was done in NVivo. Each main category was defined with the purpose to reflect its sub-categories. Using this utility, I indirectly prepared an audit trail as a way to keep track on the development of codes from transcripts into sub-categories, categories, and main categories or concepts (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). It is important to note, the higher the level of the nodes the more abstract they will become and the better it reflects the whole data generally. In this **final step**, a complete set of the key category that reflects my research questions has been developed. This result becomes a representation of the whole meaning of the data corpus to produce a scholarly report. The report consisted of a story narrated by the research informants within and across grounded key categories which could assure the validity of this analysis.

One way to present the key categories developed in NVivo is using the tree node system. As more codes were generated and merged into categories, tree index system expanded into a hierarchical structure. The nodes hierarchy of this research was

developed from the bottom-up direction to complement the inductive approach of grounded theory. In the hierarchical structure, 'The Embedment of Islamic cultures' has been identified as the first level node. The node branches out into three child nodes; the political system, everyday conducts, and contesting features on Malay-Islam's preferential status. Through these markers and categories, aspects of Islam, its cultures, and historical developments have been explored.

Figure 4 illustrates the embedment of Islamic cultures through the hierarchical structure below.
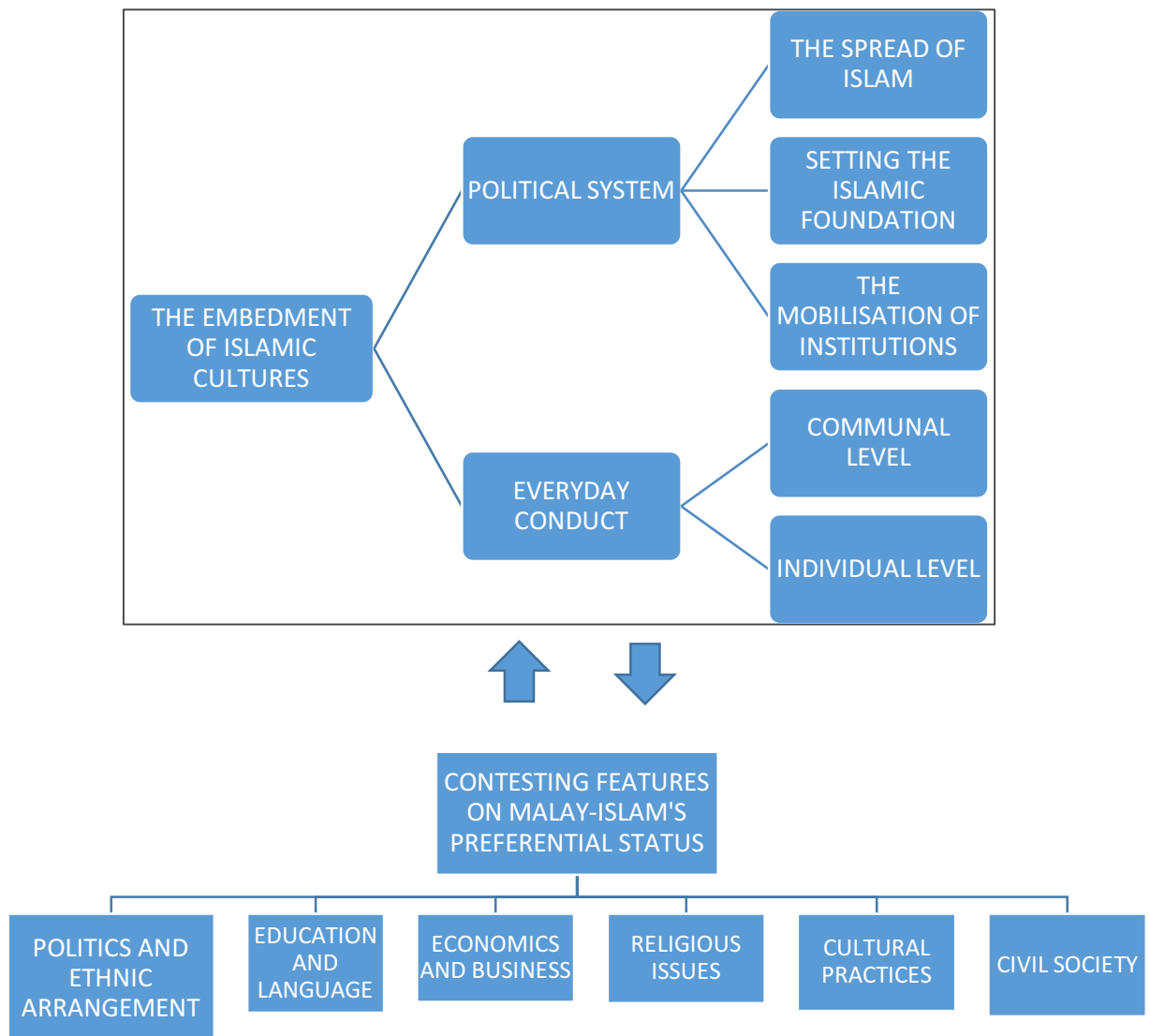
Figure 4 A tree node system of a framework for understanding the embedment of
Islamic cultures and challenges to its preferential position.

There were times I felt unsure about the conceptual interpretations of my data.
During this crucial time, Glaser's and Strauss's (1967 cited in Suddaby, 2006)
perspective had reminded what grounded theory method should offer. They claimed that
the aim of grounded theory is not about making "truth statement about reality, but,
rather, to elicit fresh understanding about the patterned relationships between social

actors and how these relationships and interactions actively construct reality", (cited in Suddaby, 2006). Bearing this in mind, I believe my interpretation would be my way of seeing the reality as negotiated by my research participants. I was also convinced by the fact that different people would likely interpret the same phenomenon in different ways, thus drawing diverse understanding.

5.9 Validity and Credibility Evaluation

Evaluation is needed for a study to be regarded as trustworthy. Schwandt (1997 as cited in Creswell and Miller, 2000) defined "validity as how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomenon and is credible to them", (p. 124-125). Charmaz (2006) proposed four types of criteria for research evaluation; credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. She listed out a set of questions which has been used as a checklist to evaluate current constructivist research. Similarly, Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie (1999) presented a structure of protocol to evaluate qualitative research. They advised the adoption of those criteria should be flexible that modification is necessary to suit researcher's priority. Meanwhile, Morrow (2005) suggested paradigm-based standards for evaluating research trustworthiness. However, she also recognised that there are some principles which could transcend the research paradigm. Her discussions revolved around the issue of data adequacy, data interpretation, and researcher's reflexivity and subjectivity. In this section, the guidelines proposed by all authors were explored and selection was made before adopting them to evaluate this research.

While there are variations of criteria in literature, my decision on measuring the quality of this research is based on the standards proposed by Charmaz (2006), Morrow (2005), and Elliott et al., (1999). Their critical discussion has directed the development of a set of criteria which are seen appropriate to evaluate the current research in the pursuit of a trustworthy study. They are the researcher's role within the research, credibility, clarity, as well as originality and usefulness.

5.9.1 Researcher's role within the research

Corresponding with the constructivist grounded theory; researcher's role within a study needs to be clearly explored. Elliott et al., (1999) maintained that a researcher has to acknowledge his perspective such as values and assumptions that he holds in communicating his interpretation on the research phenomenon. Morrow (2005) similarly emphasised the importance of addressing researcher's subjectivity by using reflexivity. This matter has been addressed in Chapter 4 on the need to situate my voice as a researcher, which is a way to recognise my role in constructing the knowledge from data. Using the first person voice in exploring data analysis and reporting the research result would better demonstrate my analytical and critical skills.

5.9.2 Credibility

Among the measures that have been used for credibility checks in this research are those based on Elliott et al., (1999). They suggested sufficient explanation about research samples is crucial to explicate why a research is conducted in a certain way. They further provided researchers a credibility checklist such as by employing another

auditor to check how codes, categories or themes are generated. Another important criterion in this respect is to be transparent on the limitation of the research or why the research is limited in certain aspects. Both Charmaz (2006) and Elliott et al. (1999) emphasised on using data in illustrating concepts developed in the study. Elliott et al. termed it as "grounding in examples" (p. 222) while Charmaz (2006) underscored on clarifying analytical strategies; which is also addressed by Morrow (2005) as sufficient interpretation of data.

Another technique to establish credibility is using an audit trail (Bowen, 2009). Creswell and Miller (2000), however, accentuated that the use of an audit trail is more congruent with the research attached to a positivist paradigm. On this claim, the illustration of how I arrived at core categories in data analysis is presented in appendices to substitute an audit trail. This, in my view, is more appropriate to communicate the analytical process of a qualitative research such as this study.

Besides these, Shenton (2004) stressed on the interviewing skill to assist truthful information. This is possible by screening informants who are willing to participate and employing the iterative questioning technique through probing. By ensuring willingness of participation and the rights of withdrawal at any time, a research could foster honesty from among respondents (Shenton, 2004), thus maintaining the credibility of information.

5.9.3 Clarity

Clarity is another element that would lend trustworthiness to grounded theory research. Under the term coherence, Elliott et al. (1999) underlined the importance of representing data analysis by means of coherence and integration without losing its nuances. The data analysis could be summarised using an integrated framework of understanding in the form of a map, figure, or diagram assisted with its explanation. These features are set to enhance the research clarity, one of the measures to ensure research trustworthiness.

The richness of information would further add clarity on a research. Morrow (2005) highlighted the satisfactory of data could be explained in terms of their quality, variety, interpretation, and negative evidence. One way to achieve this is by maximising the variation of research samples. Morrow also discussed choosing the right sample and using the appropriate interviewing strategy to fulfil the research purposes.

5.9.4 Originality and usefulness

In addition, the trustworthiness of a research could further be enhanced through its novelty. In this respect, Charmaz (2006) did not only maintain the importance of contributing to the existing body of knowledge, she also emphasised on research originality because that would demonstrate research significance. The originality could be illustrated in the data collected and the development of concepts and categories. When this research was started, I endeavoured to reveal insights of how diverse groups perceive Islamic cultures in the Malaysian society. To achieve this, I explore the signs

and practices of Islam which are reported in Chapter 6-8. This exploration is useful to draw conclusion and shape perception on the phenomenon under investigation.

The criteria of evaluation presented in this chapter will be explored in detail in Chapter 9 to illustrate the steps taken in contributing to the quality of this research.

5.10 Reflexivity

The use of reflexivity has earned an attention in grounded theory especially within the constructivist framework (Mruck and Mey, 2007 as cited in Gentles, Jack, Nicholas and McKibbon, 2014). Charmaz (2001) made an implicit note on the use of reflexivity to recognise preconceptions and assumptions made by researchers that inform their inquiry. Gentles et al., (2014) noted that Charmaz discusses reflexivity explicitly in her second edition book, while Brian (2014) addressed reflexivity as a feature component of the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, a philosophical stance of this research.

Willig (2013) offered two types of reflexivity: personal and epistemological reflexivity which "encourages us to foreground and reflect upon, the ways in which the person of the researcher is implicated in the research and its findings", (p. 25). Reflexivity could be useful in a research if it addresses "what went well and what should be altered or avoided in future research endevours", (Curtin and Fossey as cited by Carlson, 2010, p. 1104).

As cited by Hsiung (2008), the first crucial steps in reflexivity is to be aware of our own assumptions, locations, and emotional responses when information given by

informants are conflicting with ours. McNair, Taft, and Hegarty (2009) added that a researcher can overcome pre-existing assumptions by recognising the potential for various knowledge and values. This is possible by "being able to hear and sensitively probe what an informant is really telling them, even if it does not seem to 'fit' within the scope of the research", especially during data gathering (Hsuing, 2008, p, 219).

Hellawell (2006, p. 484) coined a term 'insider research' which involves someone "who possesses a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members", but is not necessarily part of that community. The opposite to this is 'outsider' whose presence is not affected by those being observed in a social setting as he can stand back from the research experience. Based on several studies that Hellawell analysed in his paper, it can be suggested that a quality researcher is the one who possesses both the 'insider' and 'outsider' characters. He summarised the secret of doing reflexivity is when a "research falls on a series of insider-outsider continua [where a researcher] has begun to reflect critically on their own perceptions of where they stand in relation to their informants, and just as, if not more, significantly what they consider to be the informants' perceptions of this relationship," (p. 492).

Mauthner and Doucet (2003) further explored the use of reflexivity in the data analysis process. They argued "researchers […] need to be reflexive about, and articulate, the ontological nature of subjects and subjectivities [they] are using in [their] research as well as the epistemological assumptions underpinning [their] methods of data analysis and knowledge construction. By doing so, researchers could be more explicit in their effort of interpreting the accounts of lives as shared by respondents. One of the important elements discussed by Mauthner et al., is to socially and emotionally

188

position ourselves in relation to our respondents. From the review of the literature so far, I conclude that researchers should be self-conscious about their role in the processes and products of research.

Some authors, however, disputed the effectiveness of reflexivity towards producing better research (Gentles et al., 2014). Finlay (2002) claimed reflexivity can be excessive that it could cloud participants' contribution in research. While this might be true, I agree with Gentles et al., (2014) who suggested reflexivity would be meaningful to assist a research development if correctly and adequately justified. This includes "acknowledging where researcher interactions have importantly influenced research processes" (Gentles et al., p. 5). One of the instances given by Gentles and his colleagues on the use of reflexivity is their rationale in deciding their research plan and methodology. Like Brian (2014), my goal of using reflexivity is to serve the purpose of this research project without overdoing it.

5.10.1 Reflexive Notes

There are several matters that need to be highlighted in the reflexive notes. First, it has been a struggle to interpret my participants' views due to the overwhelming attachment to my religious identity as a Muslim. My data analysis became rigid and was greatly influenced by the values of Islam. In this instance, I paid less attention to knowledge that appears to contradict the Islamic practices and cultures. I also tended to discard my respondents' concern. This according to Hsuing (2008, p. 215) occurred when conceptual baggage is left unexamined which hinders an "interviewer's ability to hear what the informant has to say". Borrowing from Kirby and McKenna, Hsuing

189

explained conceptual baggage refers to a researcher's belief, emotions and intellectual assumption of class, race, and sexuality.

My main supervisor advised putting aside my subjective reality, to see things in a new light, and to include views of the non-practising Muslims as well. For this reason, I re-analysed the data at hand and employed a negative case approach to find views that contradict the observations about common Islamic practices. For example, instead of coding all the positive outcomes contributed by Islamic policies, I started to look out for the other side of the story. This finally permits the interpretation of the reality from participants' perspectives. This approach has been partly informed by the constructivist grounded theory using bracketing as encouraged by Charmaz. Bracketing is one of the most challenging tasks where I need to hold my view from giving too much influence on data analysis.

Second, constructivist approach argues realities are co-constructed based on the interactions between the researcher and the participants. The realities are also not something fixed to be discovered. This understanding has led to the awareness of the right form of verbs that should be chosen in writing my thesis. For instance, Charmaz (2001) argued the verb 'explore' is more appropriate to explain the construction of reality as compared to the verb 'discover'. The understanding of this theoretical perspective has become a reminder to carefully employ the term examine, inspect, explore, discover, and investigate which are not to be used interchangeably. This research has, in fact, increased my awareness of the importance of this matter in relation to qualitative research.

Third, my identity as a Muslim researcher has also affected my expectation on my respondents. Before the fieldwork, I have been thinking of how the participants will view my presence as a Muslim. I afraid the participants especially those from other ethnic groups might not be revealing in pointing out sensitive issues related to Islam. Above all, there was positive atmosphere in all individual interviews and focus group discussions because informants seemed to be revealing, cooperative and enthusiastic to share their points regardless whether the issue was sensitive or not.

CHAPTER 6:
ISLAM IN THE MALAYSIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

6.0   Introduction

This chapter will present findings from the grounded theory analysis of the semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. The main categories and concepts explored have been summarised in Figure 4 in Chapter 5. Extracts from interview transcripts have been used to illuminate the constructed categories in Figure 4. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms have accompanied participants' excerpts and recognisable details have been modified or omitted. Contextual information has also been retained to avoid extracts from losing its context.

The analysis of the empirical data has generated three overarching categories and seven conceptual codes. The three categories are 'political system', 'everyday conducts', and 'challenges to Malay-Islam's preferential position'. As overviewed in Figure 4, the framework unearths the extent to which Islamic cultures have been embedded in the societal and political realms of Malaysia. The developed framework provides interpretive frames from which realities could be viewed (Alasuutari, 1996). It is noted by Charmaz (2006), instead of aiming at constructing a definitive picture, the grounded theory method could be used to offer an interpretive portrayal of the issue being researched.

The result of the constructivist grounded theory analysis could be represented in categories (Hallberg, 2006). This thesis has captured stories within the empirical data into a reasonable representation of key categories in the form of a hierarchical structure.

By making connections between categories and within data, this project further moves beyond descriptive analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

Detailed descriptions of each category explored will be reported in separate chapters – Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8. In reporting the analysis of the participants' data, 'two social reality' proposed by Shamsul (1996) is adopted. The social reality serves as a theoretical ground to differentiate between 'authority-defined' and 'everyday-defined' context. Shamsul's idea of 'two social reality' largely drew from the work of Hirschman (1985; 1986, cited in Shamsul, 1996). According to Shamsul, the authority-defined social reality is observed and interpreted instead of experienced. The notion of authority-defined is paralleled with Martinez's (2001) understanding of 'public transcript'. In her definition, the public transcript reflects agenda of powerful elites which discards opinions, expectations, fears, and grievances of ordinary people. The discussion of the authority-defined reality could be found mostly reported in this chapter which explores the government authorities' views on how Islam should be perceived and constructed from the political lens.

Most of the 'everyday-defined' social reality or the alternative voices of society will be explored in detailed in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. This notion unearths people's experiences of the social reality. Shamsul (1996) argued the everyday-defined context is accused of being unscientific and not objective enough by some social science researchers. Thus, it has not been given as much attention as the authority-defined social reality. Shamsul also argued ignoring the everyday-defined context is similar to political suppression and would become an obstacle to uncovering 'voices from below'.

By adopting the 'two social reality' in reporting the empirical data, balanced views from the experienced reality (everyday-defined) and interpreted reality (authority-defined) would be presented. "The great utility of this approach is that one would be in a position to capture the macro picture and the detailed internal micro dynamics in a more balanced manner". The adoption of this approach is hoped "to capture uncertainties, ruptures, and tensions which emerge from the debate" (Shamsul, 1996, pp. 479-480) which are mainly explored in Chapter 8. In this investigation, from the grounded theory analysis of data, constructs and indicators of Islamic cultures have been identified and explored from the authority-defined as well as everyday-defined contexts.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the extent to which Islam has been engraved in the political system of Malaysia. This chapter will deepen our understanding on the hegemony as a source of power by illustrating how government's exercise of intellectual and moral leadership based on the Islamic principles has facilitated the maintenance of political hegemony. This chapter contends that the values and ideals of the government have to be expressed and connected with the dominant cultures of the society to ensure the successful imposition of Islamic ideology (Bennett, 1986, cited in Oswell, 2006).

In particular, I examine the process by which Islamic values, norms, and principles are constructed, preserved, defended, and renewed in Malaysian political system to safeguard the continuation of the state Islamic ideology. The main research question guiding this chapter is stated below:

RQ1: How are Islamic cultures constructed in Malaysian politics?

To examine this question, attention is drawn to the historical and current constructions of Islam in the Malaysian politics. I will first provide a brief account of the spread of Islam in Malaysia to recapitulate important details discussed in Chapter 3. Next, I will explore the government's incorporation of Islam in its political structure and through several organisations that promote Islamic ideology. I will focus on organisations such as Malaysian Department of Islamic Development (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, JAKIM), Malaysian Institute for Islamic Understanding (Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia, IKIM), media organisations, Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), and several non-governmental organisations that are perceived significant by participants in institutionalising Islam. Some of these organisations are civil society actors as discussed by Gramsci.

This chapter generally argues that the state assembles many important institutions and mobilises them as its cultural producers to shape the understanding and practice of Islam at the political level. This chapter tries to explain the foundation upon which Islam draws its power. By invoking the Gramscian theme of power and subordination in hegemony, this chapter aims to enlighten how the ideological hegemony influences the governance of the society. This would offer a clear illustration of the symbiotic relationship between Islam and politics in Malaysia. In short, Islamisation could be argued as a central government's active plan and stimulation.

6.1 The Spread of Islam in Malaysia

As previously explored, Islam is originally based in the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula. It has been claimed that Muslim merchants who travelled to Malay

region had established crucial contact with the Malay Peninsula ruling classes and had them reverted to Islam. This explains the beginning of the influence of Islam in the practices of the inland people during the pre-independent Malaya.

Malaysian society has gone through a major transformation over the past years. Before Islam, many of the cultural practices of the locals were adopted from Hinduism and Buddhism. In this view, Islam was added to the already diversified cultures that preponderated in Malay Peninsula at that time. Muslim Sufis had to tolerate with the largely animist's influences, Hindu's remnants and Buddha's rituals in local practices.[1] People who converted to Islam had little knowledge of the *Qur'an* and their Islamic practices were not strictly based on the correct teaching of Islam (Houben, 2003). As P005_M pointed out, "If you look into their religion that time, they are either animism, Hinduism, or Buddhism which means they were not originally Muslims. So during that time the preacher came and preached. It [was] a step, the most important thing to save their '*akidah* (belief). So, they [were] still practicing something that the preacher during that time didn't stop them from practising as long as they were Muslim, slowly educate them". This also means, the practices of Malay Muslims during the early days were not of pristine Islam, mixed with other religious teachings.

This premise could be seen in Shamsul's (2005b) idea of 'Islam embedded'. Islam embedded pointed out the different form of Islam from the universal value of the religion. Islam embedded is explained by Shamsul (2010) as has been reformulated and influenced by many different elements. Azmi and Shamsul (2004) illustrated the embedisation of Islam as processes through "which Islam and the Muslims in Malaysia were moulded by a series of sociological realities, namely plural society, secularism,

and modernity", (p. 341). The result of the embedisation processes is demonstrated through moderate Islam, "one that is quite different from the fundamentalist image of Islam profiled in the contemporary worldwide discourse on global Islam", (Azmi et al., 2004, p. 341). Shamsul (2010) further explained how the process of embedisation occurred in three historical eras of the pluralistic Southeast Asia, that is, pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. The discussions in the following sections would illustrate how this chapter extends knowledge of Islam embedded beside those explored by Shamsul (2005a; 2005b; 2010) and Azmi et al. (2004) through a specific reference to political scenario.

Since the late 1970s, Islam has become an integral part of Malaysian politics, economy, and cultures. The divide and rule of British colonialism have resulted in secularisation and racial, social, and economic segregation. Secularisation during that time led to the inferior status of Islam within a political framework. Due to this, Muslims became anxious with protecting their religious values from this influence. Seeing this circumstance, the government has started to embed Islamic values in its nation-building project. In the early days of Malaya, nationalism was greatly centred on Malayness which led to the marginalisation of other ethnic groups (Mauzy, 2006). A shift occurred from ethnic-emphasis to religious emphasis in government's nation-building project. The state readjusted its ideology to assert stronger Islamic influence (Hamayotsu, 2002). This argument adds another explanation to the deepening of Islamisation in the society besides being overly claimed as a result of political competition between the United Malay National Organisations (UMNO) and the Islamic opposition party of Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS); which often disregarded other

societal factors and dynamics that also accentuate Islam (Abbott and Gregorios-Pippas, 2010). Building upon Islamic revivalism that pushes for a greater role of Islam, the government has embarked on major Islamisation project.

Islam was systematically and officially promoted during Mahathirism that displayed zealous Islamic dedication at a political level. [2] Although it has been claimed that the symbol of unity within Islam was viewed to offer a solution to the racial and social segregation caused by British colonial; I argue that the government's determination to retain the Malay Muslim hegemonic position becomes the main reason for the stronger imposition of Islam. The following sections would explore this argument.

6.2   Setting the Islamic Foundation

This section explores the prevailing elements that set the Islamic foundation in the political sphere as raised by participants. Among them are the discussions of constitutional provisions that protect Islam, the assignment of Islam in Malay identity, and the dominance of Malay political power and the appointment of religious leader.

6.2.1   Constitutional provisions that protect Islam

Most of the respondents regardless of category noted that Islam has been upheld in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. G001_F, for example, claimed that:

> We have constitution that protects the religion of Islam, we have freedom of religion that protects, [or] that us[es] the formula of peace and harmony.
> G001_F – Government authority category

198

G001_F's assertion inferred that while Islam retains the official religion status of the country, the constitution still gives freedom to other religious practices with a condition that public order is maintained. Other religions must not cause any commotions that would aggravate inter-religious harmony. Through this assertion, Islam is the legitimately acknowledged religion of the federation (Rusnak, 2012) which gives a sense of dominance in Malaysian political dimension. All government authority respondents elaborated this view and quoted several articles in the constitution that has authorised the implementation of Islamic policy.

G003_M Specifically compared with Indonesia where Islam was not upheld in its constitution by suggesting, "When Islamic policy is unstable, it (Indonesia) faces difficulty in making rules pertaining to Islam. The country would be unstable [and] could be easily influenced by any thinking that comes at one time". In Indonesia, secular communism was preferred over Islam in the course of nation-building (Hamayotsu, 2002) because Islam was perceived as a threat to national unity due to non-standardised interpretation of Islamic law (Rusnak, 2012). The former President of Indonesia sidelined Islam to inaugurate *Pancasila* as the philosophical foundation of the country (Rusnak, 2012). Whereas, in the case of Malaysia, Federal Constitution has provided a strong basis for successfully putting Islam in the political mainstream.

The special position given to Islam has become a major point of contention for those who believed Malaysia is not an Islamic country. Almost all respondent from the public category held this view. By way of illustration, P004_M stated that:

> The reality in Malaysia Islam is the official religion. But […] still Malaysia [cannot be] categorised as an Islamic state because our main law is still

according to the secular law. Unless we put Islamic law as the main reference and we implement it in our daily life then yes. Malaysia is still a secular country and Islam is an official religion.

<div align="right">P004_M – Public category</div>

Several respondents discussed the criteria of an Islamic state should be coherent with the ideology of a theocracy state. P001_M described that in order to become a theocracy state, Malaysia should uphold Islamic law and religious values as its sole state institution without depending on secular and man-made law. P001_M took a middle stance by stating that "Malaysia is a secular in [the] framework (constitution), but not as secular as some other country because of the priority it gives to Islam". P005_M described theocracy state was similar to the Islamic caliphate system but was not similar with the one endorsed in Malaysia. It could be claimed that through the lens of a caliphate system or theocracy state, Malaysia is not purely an Islamic country, but the priority that Malaysia gives to Islam illustrates the country's attempt to put Islam in the highest esteem. The cultures of Islam have been officially sown in important aspects of the country to convey strong Islamic identity.

6.2.2   The assignment of Islam in the Malay identity

Throughout interviews, I was loaded with respondents' problematisation of Islam in Malay identity which I perceived as a non-issue before my investigation started. Islam as a defining characteristic of Malays was directly stated by G002_M as stipulated in the constitution, "If you look at the definition in our constitution about Malay, what is Malay? He or she must be a Muslim. So Islam is an essential element of the definition of Malay." Article 160 (2) of the Malaysian Federal Constitution recorded

the legal fusion of racial and religious category (Haque, 2003; Tamir, 2013; Whiting, 2010). In legal sense, Malay was defined as "any person belonging to the 'Malayan race' who habitually spoke Malay … and who professed Islam", (Andaya and Andaya, 2001, p. 183 as cited in Tamir, 2013). Martinez (2001) and Rusnak (2012) also agreed upon the same view.

Malay identity has been tied to Islam by the fact that any born Malay will be registered as a Muslim in the National Registration Department (NRD). Muslims' application to convert to other religions has been officially rejected. This was evident in P001_M's claim of unapproved convert cases involving Muslims:

> There is no single convert case from any Malay Muslim to other religions being approved by religious department or *Shari'ah* court. In Malaysian law, one who wants to convert from Islam to other religions should have [an] approval from [the] *Shari'ah* court.
>
> P001_M – Public category

It can be inferred that the matters of faith fall under the jurisdiction of the *Shari'ah* law. It is important to argue that faith should be a personal choice instead of subject to a government control. It might be unjust to force someone to live with the Islamic identity when they have never or no longer practiced Islam just because the *Shari'ah* law did not give leniency to change religious status. P001_M's claim was confirmed by government authority who has been involved in defending government's stance in disapproving convert cases involving Muslims. The view was further supported by studies that reported unapproved convert cases namely Lina Joy (Tamir, 2013; Whiting, 2010) and Nor'aishah bte Bokhari (Helwa and Jasri, 2013; Maznah 2010b) that were well-publicised in media.

201

In defense of this stance, Helwa and Jasri (2013) argued that preserving Islam is obligatory from the *Shari'ah* perspective which sets out reversion or *murtad* (apostasy) is a serious crime that is liable to prosecution. They further claimed if *murtad* is not regulated it will violate Muslims' rights and dignity. Parallel with Kirkby (2008), conversion is looked as a communitarian view which "the self is realised collectively [in which] individualism must be realised within the *ummah*, or community," (Jordan, 2003 as cited in Kirkby, 2008, p. 163). Not only affecting the individual, the renunciation of Islamic faith involves the public order of the whole community (Kirkby, 2008) which is, hence, forbidden.

The restriction of faith further affects other religions in Malaysia. As Muslim conversion is prohibited by laws, the spread of non-Islamic doctrines among Muslims are legally denied. Interviewees from government group were all in the position to support and comprehended this as a protection to Islam as the official religion of the federation. G002_M for instance explained:

> You cannot put it (other religion) equal to Islam. But they [still] have the right to […] profess their religion; to perform their religious rituals, but […] you can't cross the border [and] the limit that we have put. As far as Malaysia is concerned based on our constitution actually you cannot preach to others (Muslims), but still in Sarawak [and] Sabah [states] we know they are doing it closely, then fine, do it.
>
> G002_M – Government authority category

The statement offered by G002_M conveyed two important meanings. Firstly, the position of Islam is protected by limiting the propagation of other religions to Muslims. The practice of other religions should also be confined within certain rules to guard the position of Islam. Secondly, despite this legal restriction, the propagation of non-Islamic

doctrines could not be entirely stopped. This might be due to the pluralistic nature of the society in Malaysia. The government still gives some leeway to other religions although not publicly acknowledged. G003_M added to this view:

> They [other religions] have their own fund they can do their activity as long as they do it in peace, not too outstanding and being tolerant.
>
> G003_M – Government authority category

In this assertion, Malay Muslim is given a definitive position (Reid, 2001 cited in Salleh, 2005) or a preferential status (Rusnak, 2012) that has opened up superior socio-political opportunities as compared to other religions. Through the term tolerance, G003_M tried to convey that the non-Muslims are forced to accept the superior status of Islam, but there is nothing much they could do which further signifies the inferiority of other religious groups.

6.2.3 The dominance of Malay political power and the appointment of religious leader

Participants further shared their uniformity, though unfavourably by some, that the political leadership in Malaysia has been particularly dominated by Malay Muslim. Some respondents acknowledged that the Malay political hegemony is perceived as the most important factor in ensuring the progression and maintenance of Islam central position. This view was expressed by G004_M:

> For me, Malay politic should be more dominant because it is responsible to protect Islam and [even] in YDPA's (the head of the Royal Institution or Supreme Ruler) oath should protect Islam.
>
> G004_M – Government authority category

Islam has been endorsed by Malay political power and Muslim leader that is the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*'s (YDPA or the Supreme Ruler). The YDPA is regarded as the Head of the Religion whose duty is to protect the statutory position of Islam in Malaysia (Marzuki, 2008; Fernando 2006). In each state, Islamic matters are further regulated "under the [advice of] Sultan", (G004_M) [3]. Marzuki (2008) argued that government was pressured to take necessary actions on those who tried to question the special position of Islam in the country. The high status of Islam could be implied from the fact that it rests within the power of the royal institution and government direct intervention. G003_M additionally claimed:

> In our context [of] democracy and monarchy, we have to involve in political aspect [because] whoever is in power they will make policy.
>
> G003_M – Government authority category

G003_M urged Malay political participation in supporting the ruling party. This could have served as a legal and moral basis for the possession of power by the Malay ruling party (Rusnak, 2012) for the continuity of Islam definitive position.

The discussion so far signalled "the undisputed position of the sultans as symbolic heads of their respective provincial *kerajaans* (government) [and] Islam as the official religion of the country [which provide] special socio-economic assistance and opportunities for the Malays", (Salleh, 2005, p. 475). It should be learned that the statements offered by the government authority informants filled with political predispositions in which they were all synonymous that Malay and Islam should be of the highest authority in the country. These foundations ensure the government opportunities to capitalise Islam in the political pursuit. The discussions in this section

help to reinforce my claim that the government's determination in reinforcing the Malay Muslim's hegemonic position starts with setting the strong basis to uphold Islam. On one hand, the basis helps to set the definitive position of the Malay Muslims. However, while it could also be argued that it has forced other ethnic groups into accepting a peripheral status. Questions have to be answered whether other ethnic groups are given the same rights as the core ethnic groups. Similarly, are other religions become less important as a symbolic way of giving Islam the dominant status in the country.

6.3 The Mobilisation of Institutions to Promote Islam

In the operationalisation of "Islam as a worldview and a comprehensive code of life" (Saodah and Abu Sadat, 2012, p. 104), several important institutions have been mobilised by the government. While several others have taken independent efforts to get Islam to the political mainstream. The centralisation of Islam started gradually since the mid of the 80s during the Mahathir administration (Maznah, 2010b). Almost all respondents agreed that the co-option of Anwar into the government signalled the beginning of '*Penerapan Nilai-nilai Islam*' (PNI) or 'a policy guideline for the incorporation of Islamic ethics in governance' (Abbott and Gregorios-Pippas, 2010). In exploring this policy, several established organisations that deal with Islamic matters as mentioned by respondents will be discussed here.

6.3.1 Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia (JAKIM)

First, the frequently mentioned Islamic institution according to participants was Malaysian Department of Islamic Development or well known as JAKIM. G003_M is a

general deputy director of JAKIM discussed the scope of tasks performed by JAKIM. He asserted that:

> 60 percent of our roles here (JAKIM) is coordinating religious management throughout Malaysia in three important areas, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic education, and the management of Islamic affairs.
>
> G003_M – Government authority category

JAKIM's role is very wide and all-encompassing. P001_M explained that "in 1969 it was not called JAKIM, it [was] known as the Prime Minister Religious Affair Department [which] only [had] seven [staff]. Islam was under the supervision of Prime Minister Department at that time". The department was later on transformed into an independent institution. In P001_M's account, the transformation of the department into an institution signifies that Islam claims a bigger societal role. This view was similarly held by G002_M who specified that the transformation was, "because of a great need to implement Islamic values in a wider dimension in the administration of our religion as well as other practical needs of people in Malaysia". Maznah (2010b) suggested that centralisation of control under federal government ensures "more resources flowing from the national treasury to inject Islamic imperatives into the administrative and judicial system" (p. 366). This view was confirmed by G003_M:

> Since JAKIM was established under Prime Minister Department and king council, which means its establishment was legal with [the] proper ministry, [so] we are given financial allocation around 750 million yearly.
>
> G003_M – Government authority category

JAKIM is allocated with financial assistance for Islamic development purposes. It could be drawn that the centralisation of Islamic matters under JAKIM is an effort by the

government to ensure that Islam will be under the federal government control (Maznah, 2010a) to ensure financial security.

On a different note, Martinez (2001) argued, although JAKIM comes under the authority of the Prime Minister Department, it has restricted legislative power in the *Shari'ah* law. As such, JAKIM only acts as a delegator of laws drafts to be enacted at the state level. This entails the limitation of federal government power in controlling the enactment of Islamic policy (Martinez, 2001). She further viewed that the diffusion of power by different authorities in controlling, administering, and legislating Islam was a colonial legacy. Despite this view, Martinez failed to discern that when JAKIM coordinates and delegates tasks to states in Malaysia for their enactments, that shows that it has some power to urge each state to remain under the federal government order and scrutiny. El-Sheikh (2010) confirmed this by stating that even states have the power to legislate and enforce law, they are not given absolute freedom based on the Article 75 of the Federal Constitution "that in the event of any inconsistency between state law and federal law, the latter shall prevail", (p. 449). El-Sheikh, however, did not reject the view that JAKIM's role is secretarial in nature having little binding effect in states. From another view, the power distribution is not without limit since each state has to comply with *Shafi'e* school of thought; hence, giving a standardised form of laws within the discretion of the official *Mazhab*.

Respondents also related that one of the growing roles of JAKIM is pertaining to *halal-haram* matters. Some of them noted besides observing *Shari'ah* law, the *halal* industry is a huge business in Malaysia. This issue will be explored further in Chapter 7

to demonstrate how JAKIM's regulation on *halal-haram* issues has shaped the societal and individual practices.

6.3.2 Malaysian Institute for Islamic Understanding (IKIM)

Another important institution that helps Islam to flourish in Malaysia is the Malaysian Institute for Islamic Understanding or *Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia* (IKIM) which is an important Islamic think-tank of government (Hamayotsu, 2002; Peletz, 2002). Participants from government authority narrated the government aspires to build a civilisation with a proper Islamic worldview. This according to them could be achieved if Islam is approached in a civilisational way. To materialise the ambition, IKIM was initiated in 1992 to assist the development of modern Islam by informing "more progressive Islamic views" (Saodah and Abu Sadat, 2012, p. 114). The notion of progressive Islamic views could be referred to as a modern and moderate form of Islam in order to assist acceptance especially among the middle-class Muslims as well as non-Muslims. Their acceptance is important since they are influential groups that would shape the Malaysia's political scenario.

To portray better Islam and expand Islamic worldview, participants believed the first step is to educate the public. This was evident in the statement of G001_F:

> This is the function of IKIM, to introduce the Islamic worldview to serve justice to people. […] we educate the people. Our institution is more on public education. In public education, we [use both] realities and theories.
>
> G001_F – Government authority category

G001_F is the officer at IKIM. She explained all public, regardless of what religions they profess, need to be educated about the Islamic worldview. Through education, IKIM is performing *da'wah* to the public about Islam. As the government believes that non-Muslims hold negative perception on Islam, IKIM's task is to promote the image of Islam as a progressive and tolerant religion (Jaffary, 2000). G002_M corresponded with this view and claimed, "It is our role to give a clear picture of Islam to the society, to the Malays, to the Muslims and the non-Muslims, to the Malaysian as well as the international audience." Here, there exist a misconception of Islam among Malaysians and it is their main aim to crystallise the image of the religion through education. For G002_M, the effort to expand the Islamic worldview is also customised for international consumption that Malaysia promotes progressive Islam.

G001_F suggested IKIM's methods of education among others are, "To conduct research and to have publications, [to] organise seminars [and] invite stakeholders and everybody not only for Muslims". These methods foster inter-faith understanding especially in dealing with current contentious issues; which could promote constructive inter-religious coexistence (Ellingwood, 2008).

Besides Islamic issues, current topics were also catered to through IKIM. G001_F added that:

> For example, yesterday we have obesity seminar. We have a lot of participants who are not Muslims. They come over because of obesity is a common problem to all whether you are Muslim or whether you are not Muslims and this is a problem for Malaysian as well.
>
> G001_F – Government authority category

209

In this instance, IKIM deals with a lot more general issues that would create awareness among the public in order to produce a knowledgeable society. IKIM has been given columns in at least five Malaysian daily newspapers. IKIM further broadcasts its Islamic contents through its very own radio, IKIM.fm, with the emphasis on character building. The radio becomes the main choice for radio listeners who live in urban areas.[4] Indeed, IKIM has become a source of reference on Islam for media as indicated by M001_M, "So possibly we have to find [a] way to give the correct picture of Muslim and Islam, but you have to find writers from outside like IKIM". In view of this discussion, the Islamic worldview is spread through public education by IKIM.

As shown, IKIM has done vital efforts in educating the public of the Islamic worldview. One might argue that the organisation has subtly assisted in advancing the state ideology, which is the Islamic ideology, due to its link to the government. IKIM might have involved a kind of persuasion to direct people towards certain kind of behaviour. But I argue that IKIM serves more of a public relations function where providing information becomes its main roles to the public. Borrowing from Hundhausen (1937, p.1), Puchan (2006, p. 112) wrote that public relations "create a favourable public opinion through the spoken and written word, through symbols for the organisation, its products, and services". L'Etang (2006) highlighted public relations perform socially responsible functions. This is demonstrated through its main concern to "seek mutually beneficial outcomes and relationship" with the public (Gelders and Ihlen, 2010, p. 60) such as by initiating inter-faith and inter-racial dialogues.

6.3.3 Media organisations

Most developing countries have mobilised media institutions to achieve state's plan. Media institutions have been used to inculcate elements of national developments and harmony among citizens. It has also been employed for the benefit of the ruling coalition by limiting opposition views from reaching the public. As a cultural institution, the media in Malaysia is known for its ability to maintain and create the state's Islamic ideology. The media has helped the state to produce thoughts which are consistent with the hegemonic social order manifested in the form of behaviour and beliefs. This study argues the media is an important agent of ideological discourse to mobilise social acceptance of Islam and social change.

One example of the media institution serving this purpose is Al-Hijrah TV, the first Islamic TV station. Al-Hijrah TV is an example of narrowcasting in which its contents are specialised on Islam (Fuziah, Abdul Latiff, Emma, Arina, and Hasrul, 2011). This adoption has assisted the channel to be more concentrated on its vision. As M002_F stated, "Al-Hijrah TV focuses on Islamic values in any programmes that [are] aired and [its] target audience is mainly Muslims". Al-Hijrah TV is also battling for non-Muslims' attention as it would serve as a platform to educate them to understand Islamic worldview better. She also added that a key to this is a modern representation of Islam in its contents to facilitate acceptance among the non-Muslim audience.

While the inception of Al-Hijrah TV in 2011 serves as a competitor to the established Astro Oasis – another Islamic driven channel offered by Astro (Fuziah Kartini et al., 2011), it was claimed by G003_M that Al-Hijrah TV managed to remain

competitive and achieved high rating especially during the month of *Ramadhan*. G003_M explained, "This is because our community really craves for Islamic programmes due to religious awareness". In this sense, the media is purposely tailored to cater to the needs of the Muslims' spiritual welfare. This notion concurs with Gramsci that the state ideology must be in line with the masses in order to be well-received.

Further, M002_F claimed that the media plays a transparent role to inform the community on government's action and decision. But this view is debatable. For instance, M002_F stated that she was once reprimanded by her chief officer after asking a 'wrong' question in one media conference. She justified that she tried to probe the issue further, but her investigative approach was interpreted by the politician as violating the code of journalism in the government-funded media. This example reflects the obvious power structure of the state in relation to the media. Journalists will be diverted to the main agenda if it is perceived by the state that they have strayed from it.

This shows that Al-Hijrah is no less than a government mouthpiece. The strict control in exercising journalistic freedom is also acknowledged by several other respondents which reinforce the claim that media is a tool of state propaganda. Propaganda has pejorative connotations (L'Etang, 1998) and has been employed "in both totalitarian and democratic contexts", (L'Etang, 2006, p. 24). Ellul (1965, cited in Gelders et al., 2010) asserted that propaganda is an indispensable apparatus of the state and authorities. Gelders et al., wrote that propaganda may contain false and misleading information. The act of concealing information could be argued as an example of propaganda.

The control and ownership as discussed in Chapter 2 have also explored the issue of propaganda since the state has almost a full control over media contents. M004_F criticised this issue by stating:

> In my opinion, RTM should not report all the positive news about the government. Because people are becoming increasingly fed up with this. It does not represent people's real concern; it only reports government's voice

<div align="right">M004_F – Media practitioner category</div>

RTM is a government-owned media whose main function is to propagate state's agenda and ideology in its full sense. RTM has lost trust from the public especially those who are exposed to the new media. The majority of the respondents from the public category censured that the government-owned media is biased especially pertaining to issues involving other religions and ethnic groups. PG002_F for example stated, "When it [comes to] Islam[ic] issue, the government will make statements. But when it is not [about] Islam, it is cut (censored) just like that. The media also has always silenced [the] voices of the people."

But it is not right to claim that the media in Malaysia is a fully state's propagandist because they do perform a socially responsible function. Most of the media practitioners interviewed for this project stressed out that they have tried their best to practice ethical journalism such as ensuring news integrity, giving the rights of speech, and performing a check and balance role. For example, M001_M and M007_M claimed that they avoided from taking any stance in reporting certain controversial issues by providing two sides of a story. Hence, they allowed readers to decide independently. In view of this discussion, it has been illustrated so far that the media in Malaysia is a bit of

both government propaganda and public relations with the former appears to be dominant. They have become an important ideological tool for maintaining the state hegemony.

6.3.4   Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)

Respondents further observed that the development of Islam in Malaysia has also been contributed by Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). Although PAS is an opposition party that constantly challenges the Malaysian ruling party, its contribution in revitalising Islam should not be overlooked. PAS aims to achieve a union of Islamic brotherhood. Its main objective is establishing an Islamic country. PAS has gained loyal supporters from many Muslims who wanted to see Islam as the only religion of the country. Having a tight control on the state of Kelantan, PAS attempts to fuse religion in constitutional administration and to defend the honour of Islam for the *ummah* (people) (Liow, 2004).

PAS has greatly diverted country's discourse of secularism and nationalism towards religious issues (Saodah and Abu Sadat, 2012). Despite its stance against the government, PAS's contribution in vying for an Islamic state has greatly impacted a Malaysian political landscape. Liow (2011) urged the need to view PAS as a social movement "that possesses requisite institutions to nurture cadres and leaders, and to effectively mobilise grassroots" in order to understand PAS's contribution in Malaysian politics. Liow (2011) unpacked the internal structures and process that facilitate PAS's series of successful stories. He discovered that one of the contributions to this triumph is on the role that the youth wing of PAS has played. He further coined the view that

PAS's victory in 1999 and 2008 elections was merely due to voters' protest against UMNO was incorrect. In this notion, PAS's Islamic image has been able to appeal large segment of Muslim society.

However, the coming of many extremist groups when PAS was at its peak has greatly tarnished PAS's image (M003_F). As an Islamic party, PAS has tried to appeal to non-Muslims too. But the fear of extremism has led to a sense of displeasure on Islam (M001_M); especially after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, which further increased public suspicion against Islamic movement in Malaysia.

The capitalisation of PAS's framework of Islam through co-option and institution building was government's smart move (Houben, 2003), particularly when PAS was in the unsettled situation. The incumbent party initiated its first approach by inviting an important Muslim figure into their circle which they believed to be beneficial for their political milestone. P001_M for example stated:

> Mahathir invited Anwar Ibrahim in 1982 to join the government. He promised to Anwar, if I invite you, you can lead our government department to form Islamic education system.

<div align="right">P001_M – Public category</div>

Mahathir, the then Prime Minister, became popular when he invited Anwar Ibrahim, who left an Islamic organisation known as ABIM, to join United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in 1982 (Saodah et al., 2012). For P001_M, government pursuance of Islam in the state administration was to keep up with the strength of PAS in the Islamic rhetoric. This view corresponded with Ahmad Fawzi

(1992) who saw that Islam was incorporated in government mainly due to political competition between the incumbent party of UMNO and PAS.

Hamayotsu (2002) and Ahmad Fawzi (1992) further claimed that the political rivalry had increased UMNO's emphasis on modernist Islamic concept. Ahmad Fawzi (1992) noted that when Malay nationalism was attacked by PAS as against Islam, Islamisation programme was introduced by Mahathir in his administration and became part of government's ideology. This marked a more noticeable form of Islamic imposition in the political framework of Malaysia. On this note, PAS has not only drafted plans to establish an Islamic state in its political movement but has also become a body that performs a check-and-balance function to the government. This has reinforced the debate about Islam in the political scenario of Malaysia.

This part has illustrated how PAS has contributed to promoting Islam and how its Islamic rhetoric has challenged the state to improve its Islamisation projects. Looking at the issue from the non-Muslims' perspective, one may concern of where the country is heading when Islam becomes too dominant. As M001_M expressed, "Does this country practice a progressive form of Islam or a regressive [one]" since this would determine the fate of all people particularly the non-Muslims.

6.3.5 Non-governmental organisations

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also important to reinforce Islamic ideology promoted by the government. In some circumstances, NGOs push the government to work their best to put Islam in the mainstream. As will be shown, these

NGOs reflect Gramsci's notion of civil society that acts as a site of contestation which however quite a different form of contestation. For instance, as the majority of the respondents stated, *Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa Malaysia* (Perkasa) is one of the dominant NGOs that fight for Islam's rights. Respondents argued, Perkasa has been political because "the rhetoric that it carries always seem to portray that as if Malay is threatened especially by non-Muslims", (M005_M). The rhetoric according to M005_M signified Perkasa's aim to defend Malay political power as it is affiliated to UMNO (Hwang, 2009). Liow and Pasuni (2010) claimed that Perkasa is mostly concerned with protecting the rights and privileges of the Malays. Hamayotsu (2012) similarly viewed that Perkasa is a pro-Malay movement that against pro non-Malay policies. For this reason, respondents viewed Perkasa as another political vehicle to maintain Malay hegemony. However, its contribution in urging the government to act especially on issues related to Islam is no doubt important. For Perkasa, protecting the rights of the Malays is similar to defending Islam. Here, Perkasa does not really contest the government rhetoric; instead, it acts to push the government to walk their talks especially on issues related to the Malays.

Like Perkasa, *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM) or Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement is another important organisation that has involved in Malay politics since 1977 (Saodah et al., 2012). ABIM's main mission is to ensure Malaysian society adheres to the principles of Islam. ABIM has tried to make a noticeable impact in its Islamic mission by being politically involved. When people gain more awareness of Islam they lend greater supports to ABIM as they know ABIM could work towards

promoting better Islam not only within society but also politically. G004_M expressed that:

> The good thing is when the majority of people want towards Islam; we can see NGOs could speak out their mind about Islam loudly like ABIM.
>
> G004_M – Government authority category

ABIM has been a vociferous civil society group in Islamic propagation which has been influential in the resurgence of Islam in Malaysia. Similar to Barraclough (1984), G004_M viewed ABIM as a means for political mobilisation since it has been active in criticising government with regard to Islamic issues. P001_M, however, argued, "ABIM is a huge religious group which tend to put a lot of pressure on government". This observation was also shared by Mohamad (1981) who maintained that ABIM has pressured the government to adopt theocracy state in a stricter sense. Saodah et al. (2012) furthered that ABIM has criticised the government particularly in issues of western influences, corruption, and power abuse. ABIM's eminent battle against the government was on racial discrimination that it claimed caused by the New Economic Policy (NEP) (Barraclough, 1984). For ABIM, giving special privilege to certain people based on ethnic groups is an act of discrimination because others' rights are denied due to their social status. Although ABIM's interest may be similar to the state, the pressure it displays could be perceived as a form of challenge.

Another NGO that I believe worth an attention is not a politically motivated organisation but is more multi-racial in identity. The NGO is known as Multi-Racial Reverted Muslim (MRM) organisation which was founded in 2010. Very little data could be found on MRM but its contribution to Islam should be acknowledged.

MRM is an independent organisation whose main aim is at sharing the knowledge of Islam and providing support for new reverts such as in terms of guidance. MRM has organised programmes that were designed to increase religious awareness among Muslims such as courses in the methodology of *da'wah*, the teaching of *Qur'an*, as well as *da'wah* in street.[5] Since the majority of the members are non-Malay, MRM has focused on *da'wah* to non-Muslims and non-Malay reverts. Their ethnic background, experience, and familiarity with non-Malays are valuable to help approach non-Muslims.[6] P007_F recognised that "MRM is a very good example of employing bottom-top *da'wah* approach because they already a mixture of people from different cultures." P007_F commented upon the role that could be played by MRM in establishing positive multi-cultural relations.

MRM is also attentive to current Islamic issues that have been affected by politics. For instance, one MRM member explained how their street *da'wah* has been used to clarify misconception of non-Muslims on the *Qur'an* caused by a recent political scenario:

> When we were having a street *da'wah* last year, Christians came and approached. The first Christian asked us, why you Muslims do not allow us to use [the term] Allah? Our answer is, I have no problem, and we have no problem for you to use Allah. I opened al-*Kitab* (*Qur'an*) for him and [explained].
>
> P004_M – Public category

P004_M illustrated how he responded to the controversy over the ban of the term Allah. In this way, he was able to correct misunderstanding of Islam that was caused by the ban. Also, better impression about religion has been created.

219

In view of Gramsci's civil society, it could be learned that Perkasa's and ABIM's explicit contests have brought many important issues to the government's attention from time to time. These organisations could be argued as being politically motivated to promote Islam to ensure Islamic matters preoccupy a central position. It is reasonable to assume that they act as a vehicle for political mobilisation in Malaysia which at times could be a source of government's fear due to their overt oppositional stance (Barraclough, 1984). This confirms the idea that civil society becomes a field of contestation where the state struggles to dominate and maintain dominant values, ideas, and norms of the society (Landau, 2008; Ramasamy, 2004). However, as shown, it is simplistic to regard their contests are struggles of one ideology against another because both have put Islam as their central discussion. In fact, the civil society groups in this chapter have illustrated how their functions encourage the state to increase the concerns over Islamic matters.

Whereas MRM is more of a welfare-oriented organisation which has been independent to promote Islam outside the continuum of politic and remains in the civil society sphere. MRM presents a version of civil society which recognises politics is not the only means to deepen Islamic virtues in the society. Thus, it retains an abstinence from involving in direct political debates with state actors. Despite this difference, they all serve important means to widen the institutionalisation of Islam. These are not the only institutions that serve to propagate and promote Islam in Malaysia. Their roles are being highlighted based on respondents' observations which I believe is useful for illustration.

6.4   Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated Islam has been promoted as one of the state ideologies to maintain government political hegemony. As stipulated in the constitution, Islam is the official religion of the country. Hamayotsu (2002) argued that this stipulation "[is a way to safeguard] the ideological as well as political supremacy of the Muslim Malays", (p. 354). However, scholars claimed that this has positioned Islam merely as a tool for Malay political mileage. This view could partly explain the political aspect of Malaysia, but it could be attested that it is not an accurate conclusive point.

The increasing importance of Islam should not be denied and the fact that the reputation of Islam has been lifted in Malaysia should not be undermined. As religious consciousness has increased, the Islamisation projects are no longer a mere political rivalry and state manipulation of power but more towards fulfilling the needs of the community for stronger Islam. This view concurs with Rusnak (2012) in his bottom-up approach. The need to reaffirm Muslims' identity has compelled the government to seriously impose Islam, especially in the current global situation (Rusnak, 2012). From Gramsci's theoretical explanation, in order to establish consent, state must promote values and ideas that are congruent with the needs of the people. This is what the Malaysian government has been doing. The accommodation of Muslims' concerns through the state political Islam has, to a certain extent, ensured the continuity of the state domination.

Malaysia has been quite successful to incorporate Islamic cultures into its political realities. In Section 6.2.1, I have argued that the incorporation of Islam into the

plural society would not have been fruitful without its symbolic institutionalisation in the Federal Constitution. Further, I have explored the assignment of Islam in the Malay identity as one of the agencies to set Islamic foundation. Before the investigation, I was conditioned into accepting the Malay-Muslim identity as a natural outcome of being Malay. This similarly applied to my research participants. Most of them were not aware of the agenda behind the inclusion of Islam in Malay identity. However, the problematisation of some respondents of the Malay-Muslim identity has given an insight into the different side of the reality. From the religious perspective, the attachment of Islam with a specific ethnicity is not part of Islam. However, the state has used this means to maintain its hegemony and to bring the Malay-Islam ahead of other ethnicities. The dominance of Malay-Muslim political actors has additionally justified greater Islamic causes. On this note, it is doubtful that Malaysia upholds the real Islam because it appears that people don't have the rights even to profess the religion of their choice.

As demonstrated in Section 6.3, some institutions have been politically motivated to promote Islam. I argue that these organisations have been the exercise of both propaganda and public relations because to reject one of them would not correctly interpret the Malaysian situation. Further, the state's responses to civil society groups could be argued as a way of retaining its power. The government has supported and assisted the formation of Islamic groups (Hwang, 2009) who later became agents of Islamisation (Nasr, 2001, cited in Ufen, 2009). Through this endeavour, the state has directly averted any form of radical Islamic groups from emerging by accommodating and monitoring closely their activities (Hwang, 2009). Instead of being checked on, this

has become the government's elusive control. The view that civil society could reinforce the democratic practice (Halima Sa'adia, 2011) in Malaysia is, thus, disputable because the finding seems to point that civil society groups strengthen the state hegemonic power rather than contest it. It is a form of power bargain between the authority and the civil society groups, yet social change could hardly occur.

In this chapter, I have explored the political framework that sets the status of Islam in the country. The constitutional provisions to protect Islam, the assignment of Malay identity, and the dominance of Malay political power and religious leader have positioned Islam in the political mainstream. Several Islamic institutions have been underlined to illustrate how they contribute in advocating Islam in the political mainstream. Muslims' general awakening of Islam and government's dedication to institutionalise Islam as a way of life have contributed to create encouraging Islamic atmosphere in Malaysia. This examination has exemplified that Islamic symbols and concept have been infused with the political history, foundation and current practices. The discussions of how Islam got its preeminent position have offered better understanding of the role Islam plays in the Malaysian politics.

In sum, Islamic cultures have been largely interwoven and ingrained within the political sphere of Malaysia which become a provision to the state hegemony. However, I argue that the institutionalisation of Islam has directly affected non-Muslims despite its main concern to govern Muslim's conducts and to provide alternatives for Muslims over existing secular systems (Saodah and Abu Sadat, 2012). The state's project to enhance the identity of Malaysia as an Islamic country has, at some point, given non-Muslims no options but to accept or negotiate these circumstances.

In the next chapter, specific Islamic laws which have been in place will be explored in detail. Under the 'everyday conducts' category, Chapter 7 will discuss the influence of Islamic values in the Malaysian society and in the individual beliefs and practices. The chapter will try to examine how influential Islamic values and cultures are in Malaysia.

CHAPTER 7: THE EVERYDAY CONDUCTS – COMMUNAL LEVEL AND INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

7.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the second category deduced from grounded theory analysis known as the 'everyday conducts'. The 'everyday conducts' refers to how the elements of Islam could be found in the communal setting and how it has become the practices of individuals. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section highlights major Islamic symbols to exemplify the influence of Islamic values and norms as a collective phenomenon of the Malaysian society. This includes Islamic *da'wah*, Islamic education, Islamic wealth management, and other common societal practices. The second section explores faith or belief system as the foundation of religious practices. Respondents revealed that the declaration of belief and the outward expression of religion provide symbols in illustrating Islamic cultures as the widely-practiced norms of individuals. The section discusses several Islamic rituals such as prayers, covering *aurah*, and the observance of *halal* and *haram* matters. Generally, the main questions underlying this chapter are stated below:

RQ2: How Islam influence the Malaysian culture and how is Islam practised by individuals?

The political aspects of the country directly influence Muslims' personal lives (Ghadami, 2012). Adapted from BBC (2002), Henderson (2010) summarised that *Shari'ah*'s notion of "obligatory, recommended, permitted, disliked and forbidden" has been also influential in regulating conducts in terms of "diet, dress, and personal and

social interaction" (p. 246-247). In view of this, both political and religious aspects have moulded the culture and lifestyle of most of the Muslims in Malaysia.

Culture in this research refers to shared values, beliefs, ideas, norms, knowledge, and ritual practices which define and express who we are. Culture is transferred socially from one generation to the next. Avruch (1998) explained people do not merely inherit and learn the culture, they also create culture. Culture in this sense is mutable and continuously constructed. "Culture guides thinking, doing and being, and becomes patterned expressions of who we are" (Giger and Davidhizar 2002, p. 80). It is also a "patterned behavioural response that develops over time as a result of imprinting the mind through social and religious structures and intellectual and artistic manifestations", (Giger et al., p. 80). In line with Wuthnow (2008), it is argued that religious symbols, practices, and texts are essential elements of culture to represent an identity. The present thesis treats Islamic cultures as practices which are loaded with Islamic values that are embedded in the wider Malaysian culture.

7.1   Communal Level of Everyday Conducts

The everyday conducts is collectively and personally constructed within, and influenced by, particular social conditions. At the collective level, Islam has moulded the culture of the Malaysian community. The majority of the respondents unanimously stated that Islam has been awakened when the former Prime Minister of Mahathir Mohamad took control Malaysia. Major Islamisation projects have been carried out to suit the title of the Islamic country as announced by Mahathir. As a basis of an Islamic country, religion has been pragmatically appropriated and incorporated in the state

leadership. This has given Malaysia an ideological framework as a new developing nation since the mainstream culture of Malaysia has been influenced by Islam (Saodah and Abu Sadat, 2012). Maznah (2010b) viewed the expansion of *Shari'ah* legal system as the core of Islamisation project and the state's platform to promote Islam. The majority of the respondents observed that this has assisted in the profound cultivation of Islamic values and norms in Malaysia. The society has been more Islamic than before. Communal Islamic symbols will be discussed in terms of Islamic *da'wah*, Islamic education, Islamic wealth management, and other common societal practices.

7.1.1   Islamic *da'wah*

Malaysia openly supports *da'wah* (propagation) movement in asserting its identity as an Islamic country. Islamic *da'wah* and education started in the early 1980s and is usually carried out by religious individuals, non-governmental organisation (NGOs), and certain government bodies. *Da'wah* refers to the 'call' (Kerr, 2000) or propagation of Islamic doctrines in to enjoin continuous contemplation of Allah. *Da'wah* "has been viewed as a duty incumbent on the believers to encourage fellow Muslims in their struggle to lead more devout and pious lives", (Jouili and Amir-Moazami, 2006, p. 624). It could be argued that government's positive attitude towards Islamic *da'wah* have contributed to public religious awareness.

Yousif (2004) argued that *da'wah* in Malaysia is more towards strengthening Muslims' faith. However, this research found *da'wah* is beyond that. The interview participants perceived *da'wah* as reaffirming inter-religious relations in the creation of society. Interfaith understanding includes the need to be spiritually prepared in listening

227

others' opinion with respect and love (Borelli, 2008). As confessed by P004_M, people should understand each other's faith intellectually as opposed to emotionally. The inter-religious understanding would lead towards the peaceful coexisting environment and mutual respect between Muslims and non-Muslims (Ellingwood, 2008). P007_F observed the importance of collaboration among people of different religious background in *da'wah* NGOs:

> Their group [are] a mixture of people from different cultures. To me [it] is good because like even in IDT (interactive *da'wah* training) we have programmes with churches [and] the *Sikh* temple. If we don't mix with these people how they can see good about Islam. Usually, we show [and] then we talk about [faith] if they show openness.
>
> P007_F – Public category

Besides explicating the approach of *da'wah*, P007_F showed how the method serves to manage positive impression of *da'wah* NGOs. *Da'wah*, as proposed by P007_F, enables different faith adherents to gather as "equal members of a universal religious brotherhood" (Al-Faruqi, 1976 as cited in Kerr, 2000, p. 162). For P007_F, being knowledgeable about Islam should not hinder "free and open contact between [different] groups" (Soon, Azirah, and Buttny, 2014, p. 13). The roles of NGOs have been perceived dominant by the respondents in the promotion of Islam such as "by making a lot of statement about Islam", (M001_M). Here, the civil society groups lend supports to government's *da'wah* efforts rather than challenging them.

Liow (2011) claimed that *da'wah* has driven Muslim's social-political activism. Islamic values particularly have provided means to address social and political

challenges in order to restore Muslim society. M003_F believed *da'wah* is a medium to correct wrong views about Islam. She stated:

> Although we have something like ISIS […] that professed to kill in the name of Islam. But we also have Muslims who are vocal in their objection to it because they understand what Islam is about and they are able to tell people what Islam is.
>
> M003_F – Media category

Here, propagation of Islam would encounter the current international negative portrayal of Islam. M003_F demonstrated her responsible journalism attitude by supporting attempts to correct the global media misrepresentation of Islam. In today's environment, *da'wah* appears as a method to rectify negative global homogenisation of Islam and Muslims rather than aiming to convert people (Jouili and Amir-Moazami, 2006) due to the negative and stereotypical portrayal of Muslims and Islam by the western media (Shamsul, 2005b). *Da'wah* for this purpose should be done by people with deeper religious knowledge (Jouili and Amir-Moazami, 2006). As a sub-editor in a government-owned news provider and as a Muslim, it could be sensed that M003_F felt compelled to shoulder this task through her explicit support for this effort.

In view of this discussion, *da'wah* is a collective activity because it involves different actors within the community. *Da'wah* is vital in raising the status of Islam as the official religion of the country. It acts as a foundation that leads towards major societal changes within the society which will be shown in the sections that follow.

7.1.2 Islamic education

Education could be considered as a form *da'wah* because it spreads goodness and Islamic knowledge. In support of its Islamisation project, the government has provided faith-based education starting from a basic level. Islamic education became the concern of the government since the 1970s (Miller, 2004). G002_M explained, "Since independence, there are a lot of money being spent by the government to support Islamic education, religious school, even Islamic university and other Islamic institutions".

It was derived from respondents' data that people has become more inquisitive religiously and was referred by participants as an awakening of Islam. M003_F communicated this point in her statement below:

> On the education side, Islamic schools are really gaining popularity in Malaysia. People are willing to pay a whole lot of money even more than the university education for Islamic kindergarten, Islamic primary schools. So, I think it is accepted that most parents nowadays are trying their hardest to teach their children about Islam.
>
> M003_F – Media practitioner category

The awakening of Islam is gauged through the increasing demand of Islamic education. M003_F rationalised her view by stating due to parents' increasing awareness of the religious importance, they have been more concerned to provide Islamic education to their children. Islamic education provided by private education usually offers better approach with more expensive fees. This, however, has no longer viewed as an obstruction for parents. The notion of knowledge in this sense holds "a strong collective implication" in which individuals such as family members "is in charge of serving the community through religious know-how and also through scientific and pedagogical

means", (Jouili and Amir-Moazami, 2006, p. 622), in this example, parents' informed decisions in sending their children to any best Islamic schools.

The interest in Islamic education could be argued as a universal need. For example, in Canada, parents are committed to providing Islamic education for their children because they identify its centrality in "develop[ing] a knowledge base and ethos rooted in Islamic beliefs, traditions, and thought", (Zine, 2008, p. 6). Zine (2008) distinctively defined the term 'Islamic' education as a specific educational approach that promotes the growth of spirituality and religious identity.

The significance of Islamic education is seen in various government educational programmes. For example, G003_M commented that Islamic education has been introduced in non-Malay dominated schools:

> Chinese schools have a religious education. They have KAFA (*Qur'anic* and *Fardhu Ain* Class) education in the afternoon [and] in Negeri Sembilan [state], we have nine Chinese schools and four of them offer KAFA class. It is conducted by the Religious department with the request of the school because there are many Malay Muslim students. They used Chinese school to teach Islam and they even have *surau* (mosque).
>
> G003_M – Government authority category

Introduced by Jakim, *Qur'anic* and *Fardhu Ain* class (KAFA) is a compulsory Islamic education in primary schools that teaches children to recite *Qur'an* properly as well as exposing them to knowledge and practices that are essential for Muslims (Azilawati, Wan Malini, Fadhilah, Suhailan, and Fakhrul Anwar, 2011). From G003_M's assertion, religious subjects are also stressed out in the majority non-Muslim schools or national-type schools (vernacular school). It appears in the example, although

231

non-Muslims have their own schools, they still cannot escape from a direct Islamic influence through educational programmes prepared by the government.

Commented upon the Islamic education in the state of Terengganu, P010_F said, "I was interested about Terengganu when Idris Jusoh, the former Minister of Terengganu state, introduced *ulul albab* educational programme. They choose certain schools with *ulul albab* title and fund that school and they have like students who have to memorise *Qur'an*. So, they produce *hafiz* and *hafizah* (title for those who memorise *Qur'an*)." *Ulul albab* is a programme that combines both scientific and religious knowledge based on *Qur'an*, *Ijtihad* and encyclopaedia as its basis (Norhazriah, 2012; Arniyuzie, 2015). As is clear, since Islamic education is the ministry's concern, financial supports have been allocated for implementing various programmes. This only applies to Islam, not other religion.

Islamic programmes have also been pursued at the higher level of education such as in a university. Adding to this discussion, G003_M said that, "The first faculty of Islamic study was established in 1955 known as Kolej Islam Klang, followed by another Islamic faculty in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). This institution gave birth to new generations who are religiously literate". In short, the government has been very keen to create a holistic human being through education. Islamic education according to G002_M is "the key to the proper development of Muslims" in order to gain respect from every ethnic group.

Seeing the major development of Islamic education, one might feel anxious on the bias treatment given to Islam. It is vital to address only Islam is given the rights to

its religious education in national schools. Similarly, it appears from the data that other ethnic groups must assimilate with the host culture. The imbalances have worked to the disadvantages of the minority groups in the society. Despite being given national-type schools, non-Malays continue to be marginalised. This issue will be explored further in Chapter 8.

7.1.3   Islamic wealth management

The wealth management tries to establish an Islamic identity of the Malaysian society. For instance, through the practice of *zakat* or almsgiving, Muslims are informed on the importance of wealth purification. *Zakat* could be done by transferring wealth ownership to certain people with certain terms and condition (Norazlina and Abdul Rahim, 2011). Respondents, especially the Muslims, mentioned *zakat* could preserve Muslims' welfare through a centralised *zakat* management that deals with *zakat* collection and distribution. *Zakat* aims towards providing socio-economic justice (Norazlina et al., 2011) and economic development (Hairunnizam, Sanep, and Radiah, 2009) and is, thus, seen as an effective way to resolve poverty since the time of the prophet.

The government has been determined in encouraging Muslims to pay *zakat* since it is part of the pillars of Islam. To increase the awareness to pay *zakat,* M001_M asserted that Zakat Collection Centre worked with his media organisation in publishing a series of articles on the importance of *zakat*. The awareness on the obligation of *zakat* is vital as every individual Muslim is mutually responsible to the welfare of the society.

However, some raised a questionable view regarding *zakat* management. M003_F said that:

> For example, *zakat* [centre] is very efficient in collecting *zakat* [fund]. But I'm very curious about the reimbursement. I was the subscriber [of] a *zakat* official magazine. [When] I saw the division or the distribution [of *zakat*], I was very surprised to find that the biggest *asnaf* (recipient) are the amil, the people who collect the *zakat*.
>
> M003_F – Media practitioner group

M003_F raised irregularity that occurred in the so-called Islamic institution. For her, this should not have happened seeing the *zakat* has been collected to be distributed to unfortunate people. M005_M also voiced out similar curiosity as he suggested that *zakat* so far has not been successful in solving poverty issues not only in the society but also among Muslims.

Muslim's economy is further maintained through a systematic wealth and property management. Such a management is important in Islam because it is linked to the welfare and well-being of individuals and society. The pioneer and the only established public trustee as mentioned by respondents is Amanah Raya Berhad (ARB) which was also used to be a government agency (Alma'amun, 2013). With the growing awareness of wills writing among Muslims, other institutions have now offered Islamic estate planning services (Alma'amun, 2013). M003_F stated that, "JAIS (Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor) and Jakim are the two examples which provide this kind of service with a small fee". Wills or termed as *wasiyyah* in Islam is essential especially in the management of deceased's wealth. There have been increasing claims about frozen estates owned by Muslim beneficiaries (e.g.: Siti Asishah and Rusnadewi, 2014; Alma'amun, 2013). M003_F stated:

> If you don't write a will then you die, they [Amanah Raya] will withhold your property. They have frozen about 40 billion worth of assets.
>
> M003_F – Media group

The issue raised by M003_F has been caused by the inefficiency of administrative and settlement procedures as well as Muslims' lack of knowledge to manage their property beneficiaries (Siti Asishah, et al., 2014; Alma'amun, 2013). It could be suggested that the estate planning has not been perceived with great importance by most Muslims, hence they did not seriously put wills into writing that later on caused family disputes (Alma'amun, 2010). Alma'amun (2010) discussed that failure to leave wills would risk of losing economic values especially when it comes to landed properties because the property will be divided into many portions if followed the *faraid* (Islamic calculation). *Faraid* or the law of succession in property administration was viewed by most people as burdensome rules which lead to the delayed distribution of deceased's estate (Rusnadewi, Siti Asishah, and Noor Inayah, 2013).

With regards to this, I believe all people regardless of religions should be informed on the importance of wills writing and its potential consequences to living heirs. The awareness is vital in creating an economic literate society to help everybody grows economically. Overall, the government's exertion in providing *Shari'ah* abiding avenues for Muslims to adhere religious obligation to become responsible heirs and *zakat* payers should be appreciated. The notion that religious values are a hindrance and impractical for economic modernisation as offered by western theorist (Rusnak, 2012) is refutable. However, as raised by some respondents, mismanagement and inefficiency in executing these institutions could still hinder the efficient Islamic wealth distribution in the society.

235

7.1.4 Common societal practices

The preferential policy of Islam has largely influenced the Islamic revivalism in many other aspects of the society. Most of the research participants regardless from which category they were, and which racial group they belong to, agreed that Islamic values and cultures could be observed in their surroundings. For example, Friday has been selected as a public holiday in some states of Malaysia. This has been the norm of the Kelantan state for quite some time. Respondents commented, "sellers [must] close their shops even though they are Chinese" (P008_F). The order of offices and shops closure is to allow Muslims to attend Friday sermon and prayer without hassle. The respect given to the holy day of Islam is consistent with the state's Islamic status. However, it must be noted, although this eases the Muslims to observe their religious rituals, this has affected the activities of non-Muslims. The imposition of a penalty for the non-abider applied to all further signifies the non-Muslims' limited freedom.

Another state such as Terengganu likewise implemented the same rule followed by Johor state only a few years ago. Though, not all companies, especially private ones, follow the norm in Johor. As PG002_R stated, although she agreed with the implementation, the ununiformed rule has caused difficulties for some working spouses. If one of them works for the government which Friday and Saturday are the off-day while the other works in a private sector which Sunday is the only off-day, the spouses would not have a family time together. PG002_R suggested, "if they want to make Friday as an off-day, it is better if they standardise [the rule] to both government and private sectors". This signifies that the imposition of the rule does not only affect the religious issues but also other aspects of life.

Another respondent from the government authority category used to view it with scepticism. G005_F commented that:

> Come to think of it now, if you institutionalise *Jumaat* (Friday) as the off day of the week, there are things that you can do. Because there are so many *surah* (Qur'anic verse) that you need to [read] on Friday, so if you are in [your] office how [can you read them]? I think it will bring wonders to some people who really want to give time at a younger age to do all these, it looks minor but I feel it [gives] big impact.
>
> G005_F – Government authority category

In Islam, Friday is known as the prince of all days. It is compulsory for a Muslim male to attend Friday sermon in *masjid* (mosque) and to perform *Zuhr* prayer congregationally. As G005_F stated, by making Friday an off day, Muslims would have a better opportunity to practice some religious rituals more freely. In general, the institutionalisation of Friday as an off day is to invite Muslims to embrace religious practice as life ways.

It is imperative to note from G005_F's statement that praying congregationally is encouraged in Islam because it would increase brotherhood among Muslims. The act of gathering with the other fellow Muslims for a common purpose creates a sense of belongingness. The collectiveness makes prayer as part of communal religious activities. Borrowing from Jamal (2005), Moore (2007) discerned the use of mosque or any prayer room help to galvanise Muslim group consciousness and identity. In Henkel's (2005) and Krauss's et al. (2006) view, praying congregationally involves the maintenance of both the relationship with Allah in the form of rituals and the relationship with other people. Congregational prayer could be regarded as a dominant representation of a collective identification with Islam which could further strengthen

237

the identity of the Muslim society. In short, "the Muslim ritual of s*[o]lat* is important for the reproduction of a particular collective representation" (Henkel, 2005, p. 489) and "has always been part of groups and organisation", (Wuthnow, 2008, p. 334).

In addition, G005_F also accounted infrastructures and facilities that have been provided by authorities to further impart Islamic values. For instance, G005_F stated, "Now you can stop and pray at [Rest and Relax stop] along the roadside, and if you go to any shopping malls, the management provides a place for prayer such as in the basement which was not available last time", (G005_F). This illustrates the authority's seriousness in making Islam a culture. Another example, a mosque is built in every majority Muslim settlement and a space of prayer is allocated in many companies even though they are owned by non-Muslims. In Islam, a mosque is one of the important markers where Muslims gather and perform their rituals for their spiritual needs. P010_F stated, during the holy month of *Ramadhan*, mosques will be fully occupied by Muslims who really want to get a blessing from Allah. This is the time where many activities are performed from *Tarawikh* prayer (additional prayer during *Ramadhan*), *iftar* (breaking fast), *qiyamullai* (midnight prayer) to *Qur'anic* recitation.

Houben (2003) recognised that mosques or *majids* serve the purpose to teach people about *Qur'an* and its interpretation (*tafsir*) in the early days of Islam. During the time of the prophet, the mosque is considered as a central place for any activities. M005_M explained:

> In our history, the *masjid* (mosque) in Islamic civilisation concept that we know was regarded as an international centre where people do business, rest, and seek knowledge. But our *masjid* does not promote this all-inclusive activity. The

masjid is only for rituals where no human interaction could be observed when the religious rituals end.

<div align="right">M005_M – Media practitioner category</div>

In this statement, M005_M expressed his concern over the cost effectiveness of having many mosques when they are not fully utilised considering millions of public funds has been spent to build and maintain these mosques. The establishment of house of worship is not sufficient to establish the culture of Islam without real appreciation. M005_M is right by looking at the separation between the everyday lives and the spiritual needs lead by some Muslims today.

Rituals could be suggested as forming major Islamic culture in the society. Besides the mosque as explicated above, the call of prayers or *adzan* from mosques has been regulated for five daily prayers. The symbolic meaning behind the *adzan* is to invite Muslims to stop their activities in the remembrance of Allah. Admittedly, not every Muslim immediately performs prayer or goes to *a* mosque after *adzan* being made. Although *adzan* calling creates conducive Islamic atmosphere, in some states it is considered as public nuisance especially in a state where opposition party rules. For instance, G005_F specified, an opposition party member in Penang, had proposed that *adzan* should be stopped with the claim that it has caused a disturbance. She explained Islamic sphere is not strong in Penang state as compared to other states since Muslims are the minority. It can be inferred there has been an effort to curtail the practice of Islam in a non-Muslim majority community. However, this could be argued as a non-Muslim's response to the biased emphasis of Islam.

Other form of Islamic culture that could be witnessed is the increase of airtime for religious driven media contents. The exposure to Islam in public space becomes more pronounced. Discussing Islamic matters in university used to be contained by the government. But now, as P008_F said, "We can see our TV programmes have shifted to Islamic-driven contents", which signified that open approach to Islam has been accepted by the ruling government. PG002_R saw the benefit of the religious programme aired on television since, "it could expose people of all ages to get better understanding and exposure to the true teaching of Islam". This view coincides with Yousif (2004) who believed that religious programmes on television could help to educate non-Muslims about the ideals of Islam.

The strong emphasis of Islamic contents has however led to the reduce of non-Islamic ones. PG001_A argued, "When we watch a western TV show and such, I realised that there are a lot of contents are cut out, you know". PG001_E offered a similar view:

> Like I said, we don't reject the Islam thing; in fact, it is interesting we can listen to it too. But allow some space for other races or religions to also have their own TV show or radio station.
>
> PG001_E – Public category

In respect to this, the non-Muslims' rights to entertainment have been restricted. Although the existence of direct broadcast satellite pay TV service such as Astro allows viewers to watch whatever programmes they wish, their contents will still be filtered and screened under the Lembaga Penapisan Filem (LPF) or Film Censorship Board. I believe this is one of the government's ways to inject the Islamic ideology in the society.

On one hand, one may argue that Islamic programmes serve to develop the identity of the society as visualised by the state. On the other hand, one might question as to why other religious programmes are not being given the same exposure. One possible answer to this would be due to the conservative stance endorsed by the government which denotes the unwillingness to open up to other ethnic and religious values. This, however, has never been good for the public exposure. People should be given rights and freedom to access any form of media in search of different views to allow them to make informed choices. In fact, the public would not be socially duped just because of these controls since they could still find other sources of information.

A celebration is another important culture in Islam. *Hari Raya* or '*Eidul Fitr* is one of the meaningful universal celebrations among Muslims. Though, its celebration gives a different interpretation to some people even in Malaysia. One of the respondents said that the month of *Ramadhan* (the month before the *eid*) is more important than the '*Eidul Fitr*. She stated, "Before '*Eidul Fitr* we fast in the month of *Ramadhan*. The *Ramadhan* is very important for Muslims like we can see everybody [is] fasting [and] perform[ing] *Tarawikh* prayer for the whole 30 days. We also develop our spiritual belief [and] we are in that sense pious. Then we celebrate the '*Eid* and that's where the celebration that is really celebrated by Muslims. We go to the mosque, we have festivities with our family", (P010_F). For P010_F, the month of Ramadhan is the month to develop a sense of piousness while the '*Eid* is more about celebration and strengthening family ties. It is noteworthy that celebrating '*Eidul Fitr* by visiting relatives and friends has become one of the popular traditions even among non-Muslims. PG001_E commented that:

> I think Islam has a very nice culture […] they are like a big family. I have my own experience when I stayed in Port Dickson where the majority of them are Malays, so they invited me for *Raya* ('*Eidul Fitr*) and you know we get together.
>
> PG001_E – Public category

'*Eidul Fitr* for PG001_E spreads a sense of comradeship. PG001_B similarly held "During *Hari Raya*, my parents will walk to their friends' house and eat". As a multi-racial society, '*Eid* celebration is no longer exclusive to Muslims. Inviting non-Muslim friends and neighbours to celebrate the '*Eid* have been part of the culture of Muslims in Malaysia. Even though '*Eid* celebration has its religious rituals, by inculcating universal Islamic moral values of brotherhood gives the celebration more meaning to the plural community like Malaysia. This tradition is also practised with other religious festivities. It could be said that Malaysian Muslims nowadays have been more open to visiting their non-Muslim friends to take part in their celebration as appreciating the multi-religious society.

In this section, I have explored major Islamic symbols within society to illustrate how Islamic values, norms, and principles have influenced Malaysian society. The signs of Islam indicate that Islam has been much ingrained as collective life ways. This counters the view that *Shari'ah* law in Malaysia has been merely symbolic (Shamsul, 2010). Although Islamic norms have regulated Muslims' activities, these have been perceived as restrictions for non-Muslims and for Muslims who prefer more freedom. The next section will further explore Islamic influences at a personal level.

7.2   Individual Level of Everyday Conducts

This section further probes on how Islam is manifested as individual practices. I investigate how participants draw upon their understanding of religion, and how its influences and impacts on their identity. From respondents' assertion, faith and the commitment to religious belief are articulated through religious practices as well as moral conducts. Respondents' expressions of Islamic moral values in daily life demonstrate attentiveness and acknowledgement of the 'lived experience of Islamic cultures' even among the non-Muslims respondents. This section is divided into subsections discussing Islamic belief, Islamic rituals, Muslim's appearance, *halal-haram* (permissibility-impermissibility) rules, and moral principles. By allowing respondents to speak for themselves, this section anticipates discovering the meaning people assign to cultural practices.

7.2.1   Islamic belief or faith

In explaining the 'everyday conducts' category, the concept of Islamic belief is first explored. Based on the participants' articulation, Islamic belief forms a basis for religious practices. This distinguishes Muslims from other religious believers. The extent of Islamic influence has been more pronounced when many Muslims become religiously conscious of adopting and practising Islam as a way of life. Respondents were aware faith and practices have a causal relationship with the former influencing the latter.

Faith is the beginning of religion (Pickering (2011) which sets a root for any religious identity. Faith refers to *Iman* (belief), a first pillar from the five pillars of Islam. Faith covers two aspects of belief. The first part is the total conviction and strong belief in the distinctive traits of Allah as the sole originator (*tawheed*), the sovereign, and the sustainer of this world followed by the confession in the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) as the last messenger of Allah (Beg, 2005). There are six articles of faith; belief in Allah, His messengers, His scriptures or books, His angels, the day of judgement, and divine decree (*qadr*). Muslims must profess these articles by heart and act out into various forms of actions such as *Ibadah* (religious rites), good deeds and moral behaviour.

The enunciation of faith should be based on and could be seen through, the adherence of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah. This was asserted by G004_M that, "human should use both the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* as the basis of their intelligence". P002_F and P004_M equally declared that *Qur'an* provides light to true path that those who hold on to the *Qur'anic* teaching will not be misguided. *Sunnah* refers to the practices (deeds) and sayings (words) of the Prophet Muhammad which was compiled by his companions in the form of *hadith*. *Hadith* mainly serves to clarify some *Qur'anic* verses (Graham, 1993). *Hadith* is the primary source of Islam after the Qur'an. Graham proposed *Qur'an* and *hadith* act as the functional and ideological bases of Muslim traditionalism in that they serve as the basic structure of Islamic cultures.

Faith was similarly discussed by non-Muslim respondents. PG002_D, for example, stated that "when you hold on to your religious belief, no one can influence you because you know that your god is the best". M001_M from the media practitioner

category added, "End of the day your faith is in you. I'm a Hindu, I do not expect any Malay to come and convert to Hinduism". With this in mind, both statements remarked having strong faith equips oneself with the inner strength to face other religious propagation as part of life without seeing them as a threat to one's own faith.

Despite this view, the issue of faith is highly debatable especially in the assignment of Islamic identity in the Malay ethnicity. P002_F, who works as a clerk at the Multi-racial Reverted Muslims (MRM), expressed this concern:

> The **p**roblem is in future, our kids. Faith is something you can't pass on, even though you might have taught them religion, but their level of faith is weak and those with a low level of faith would be easily influenced by social problems.
> P002_F – Public group

In this statement, P002_F suggested a low level of faith leads to social problems. This means faith provides believers with a sense of godliness that prevents them from committing impermissible actions. Even though some people are born into a Muslim family, it is not an assurance that they are real Muslims. This is because faith could not be passed on even among family members. This coincides with Peek's (2005) notion of religion as an ascribed identity. An ascribed identity refers to those with a low level of religious awareness although they are Muslim by birth. At this level, individuals "may not have consciously contemplated their religious identities", (Peek, 2005, p. 225) and being Muslims is only an attribute. This is particularly true since faith is unstable and always in flux (McGuire, 2008).

Ascribed religion could be considered as being unfaithful to one's religion. Some respondents used a term hypocrite to refer to people who admit being Muslims but conceal their disbelief. This was shared by M001_M who illustrated a religious-

racial controversial news regarding a Muslim revert who fought for his child custody against his wife:

> This husband [who] married with one child fought with his wife, divorced her and now planned to get custody of their child. The easy way out, [he] convert[ed] to Islam and quietly convert[ed] the child. Let court rules in [his] favour [and] mak[ing] use of Islam.
>
> M001_M – Media group

M001_M stated the Muslim father was not faithful in proclaiming Islam because he only wanted to bring his custody case to the *Shari'ah* court. Since his wife was not a Muslim, she has no legal standing in the *Shari'ah* court and will not win the custody of their child. Here, religion is superficially proclaimed for worldly gain. The term superficial was repeated by a few respondents in describing similar occasions as above.

This part has demonstrated the dominant role of faith that forms the basis of one's religion. Belief will have an impact in someone's live if it is faithfully avowed and if otherwise, it brings no meaning. Faith follows by an adherence to specific roles which are expected to be performed by religious believers. In this view, the performance of Islamic practices serves as individuals' manifestation of their belief. The next section will discuss the primary religious performance as an obligatory Islamic duty, the prayer.

7.2.2 Establishing prayers

Any religious beliefs involve roles and roles-expectation. Henkel (2005) and Jouili (2009) suggested prayer as the most visible form of Muslim religious ritual. Performing prayer is one of the five pillars of Islam. The observance of the five daily prayers indicates Muslim's commitment to Islam (Henkel, 2005; Md Nor and Azura

246

Hanim, 2010), an act that would strengthen the identity of individual Muslims. The repeated action of prayer "is part of a matrix of disciplines and institutions in which Muslims' forms of subjectivity and social relations are forged and reproduced", (Henkel, 2005, p. 489). Jouili (2009) added prayer is a formula of self-discipline that shapes Muslims' devoutness. The embodied uniformity of prayer represents "the equality of humankind before God", (Eickelman, 1998, as cited in Hodge, 2005, p. 164) making a submission to Allah more meaningful. Prayer also symbolises physical cleanliness (Hodge, 2005) as Muslims are required to take ablution before its performance.

One of the main purposes of prayers is to ensure Muslims' continuous remembrance of Allah besides an indication of submission to Him. For M005_M, prayer is viewed as an act of connecting with Allah spiritually. He stated, "Usually our religious awareness is being judged through our relationship with God [...] prayer is a ritual which has a certain format and so on". It could be derived from M005_M's statement that a prayer is a uniformed act with a certain format. Hence, this tradition should be learned and passed on from one generation to the next. Prayer is learned behaviour that parents teach their children "how to pray by repeating simple prayers, encouraging memorisation, and involving them in religious instruction", (Wuthnow, 2008, p. 334). The performance of prayer as an unchanging tradition was also evidenced in the remarks of G002_M, "I think the fundamentals one are not changing, are not changing much. What I mean fundamental is rituals for the Muslims, for example, they still pray like when they pray 1000 years ago, even 1400 years ago". For G002_M and

M005_M, the act of prayer is a consistent reproduction and articulation of individual faith in Islam.

The notion of prayer as a cultural practice was discerned by a government authority respondent through its collective impact. G005_F held that:

> At one time, *qiyamullail* (spending the night for prayer and other ritual acts) was quite strong in my office but not anymore. Last time it was in the institution. [It was organised] quite often like every three months. I feel that the human capital development is not so strong in this era, they just work to rule.
>
> G005_F – Government authority category

In this example, besides being an individual practice, prayer serves collective purposes since it was made part of the organisation's activity. Further to fulfilling spiritual needs of individuals, the sense of solidarity among the organisation's staff could be felt in this assertion. It shows how people still participated in the activity to appreciate the spiritual development programme. Though, it can be implied that the programme was only carried out because it was made compulsory through the formal government regulations. When the rule was no longer effective, the practice ceased. To what extent the practice of Islam has really influenced, and is being appreciated, are questionable since it was only revitalised due to formal regulations with no sense of willingness.

In contrast, the performance of Islamic practices has not been made enforcement in some workplaces. P003_F stated:

> Like myself, sometimes I attend company's religious teaching at my office's *surau* (space of prayer which is smaller than a mosque) every Friday, but for women only. While, every Thursday we have *Yaasin* (a *Qur'anin* verse) recitation, performing *Hajat* prayer (an additional prayer) after *Maghrib* prayer (an obligatory prayer), then dinner.

In her case, the Muslim organisation at her office has taken own effort to organise religious activities to enliven Islamic atmosphere. The voluntarily of the practice infers that Islam has been part of her office culture. Besides obligatory prayer, additional rituals such as *Hajat* prayer and *Yaasin* recitation have also formed the practices of the company. Her remarks that religious teachings offered only to Muslim women further indicates that Muslim men can perform Friday prayer at mosques during office hours. Company's deference to the call of prayers helps Muslims to observe their prayers and reinforces its cultural aspect. In this regard, the company is committed to respecting the workers' right to observe religious obligations. In P003_F's instance, prayer could be considered as an individual activity since it is offered as a form of direct communication with Allah. Based on the discussion in Section 7.1.4, prayer is also a collective activity. While prayer is stressed out as a way of establishing a spiritual relationship with Allah, it is also being regarded as a means to uphold and reinforce Muslim brotherhood.

Many participants maintained prayer is a visible expression of a religious duty. For example, the body technique is itself an indication of Islamic tradition (Mauss, 1992, cited in Henkel, 2005) and as aforementioned, is being passed down and socially learned (Wuthnow, 2008). The analysis also suggests Muslim ritual has been a vital source of creating Muslim community (Henkel, 2005). Respondents' narratives, so far, challenge the view that religion is solely a private matter – the idea that religious practices as invasive to individual's public life (Nadia, 2013) – because they are also performed publicly. Nadia's (2013) analysis of what constituted religion as a private

249

matter elucidated that although his respondents believed they could perform religious duties at their workplace, they were "not generally supportive of religious expression in public life such as the performance of [prayer] at work" (p. 7). They would rather negotiate the practice, a way of "downplaying [...] religious distinctiveness and assimilating" oneself to the secular setting (Nadia, 2013, p. 9). However, given the difference of the study's background, Nadia's discovery could not correctly illustrate Malaysia's situation since religion is explicit in many parts of the society. Even though Islam comes with the same sources of reference, various practices have loomed, which prescribed with them unique characters and traditions. As Norris and Inglehart (2002) pointed out, the different in practices was largely due to their backgrounds such as historical traditions, colonial heritages, cultural divisions, and economic enrichment.

7.2.3 The appearance of Muslim – Covering *aurah* or veiling

Muslim appearance is another frequently brought up element by the research respondents which has been associated with Islamic cultures. But the definition of Muslim's appearance varies among respondents. To some, appearance is being considered as a strong symbolic marker (Nadia, 2013) and a most visible form of religious identity (Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Brown 2006; Ehrkamp, 2005). Covering *aurah* (the part of the body that must be covered according to Islam) makes appearance symbolically related to Islam. Almost all participants, including the non-Muslims, were aware that covering *aurah* is part of Muslims' obligations. Islam commands covering *aurah* to both men, which is from navel to knees, and women, covering the whole body except the face and palm. Corresponding to several studies

which focused on Muslim women in debating the issue of covering *aurah*, (e.g.; Berghammer and Fliegenschnee, 2014; Brown, 2006; Humphreys and Brown, 2002) the participants of this study have the same tendency.

Muslims' clothing style in Malaysia has been largely influenced by Islamic elements. For instance, *baju kurung* could be regarded as part of Malaysian Islamic culture because it covers the whole part of a woman's body. *Baju kurung* is a traditional attire which consists of two pieces, a blouse and a long skirt. Some prefer *jubah* (Arab's long cloth) to express their Islamic appearance. This was admitted by P007_F, "to dress up with *baju kurung*, *jubah* and all that, that is a culture in terms of clothing". Though, Muslims are not restricted to these outfits only. They are free to choose any clothing style as long as their *aurah* is being observed. This view was confirmed by G002_M who asserted the clothing culture has been limited by the Islamic values:

> You can see *baju kurung* for example, of course, *baju kurung* is very much Malay but I think it is influenced by the Islamic nature. You can have the varieties as far as the cultural aspect is concerned but Islam is still the limit. Islam is giving the limit to cultural flexibility. The *aurah* part is being preserved but the way it is being presented, such as the *tudung* [and] the *baju kurung* is changing, is developing, is dynamic.
>
> G002_M – Government authority category

Ruby (2006) suggested *Hijab* or commonly known as *tudung* carries Islamic values when the wearer believes it serves Islamic purposes such as to prevent gaze from males. Jouili (2009), Henkel (2005), and Brown (2006) suggested *hijab* or headscarf is the most visible form of covering *aurah*. In some country, any religious appearance could be subjected to negative stigmatisation. For example, in Turkey, especially during Mustapha Kemal Ataturk's presidency which tried to fully secularise the country,

wearing a headscarf was banned. The identifiable appearance of Muslim women caused many of them to be unemployed (Berghammer etal., 2014). This, however, did not make them taking off their headscarf as reported by Berghammer's et al. (2014) respondents. In this case, the insistence on wearing *hijab* could be interpreted as a strong faith (Moore, 2007) or a degree of conservatism (Benhabib, 2002, cited in Hochel, 2013).

Wearing *tudung* or headscarf is not unusual in Malaysian society like in some part of the world. It is evident in respondents' views that wearing *hijab* is a result of people's contemplation of Islamic belief and values. In narrating this, some respondents compared time frame and a degree of religious awareness using a symbol of changing appearance. P001_M, M004_F, and M003_F claimed that the influence of Islam was weak as compared to the post-colonial influence between 1960 to 1990 which was reflected in the uncommonness of *tudung*-wearing. M004_F asserted, "If we look at the 90s where religion was not a major thing, people have little religious knowledge, wearing a *tudung* and wearing loose clothing was not important. But now people are more concerned to wear a headscarf and loose-fitting clothing to prevent gaze". In M004_F's example, the change in appearance symbolically refers to greater spiritual devoutness and a return to traditional Islamic norm.

The gesture of covering *aurah* as a sign of piety was also claimed by M003_F. She stated, "In the 70s, it is prohibited to wear *hijab* in Malay schools. There was a time where people wear *hijab* only for fashion". According to Henkel (2005) and Jouili (2009), in an environment where freedom of religious expression is restrictive, self-discipline to enact religious obligations in public is a sign of committed Muslims. In

M003_F's comment, religious awareness was low since no effort was taken to defend their religious belief into practice.

However, not all aspect of covering *aurah* conveys religiousness. In other words, not every Muslim who wears a *hijab* or loose attires is pious. Berghammer et al. (2014) learned from Turkish and Bosnian Muslim women through their study that wearing a headscarf is marked as a private matter which does not indicate religiousness. Their study reported that Bosnian Muslim women only referred a headscarf in relation to praying. While for Turkish women, although they were pressurised to wear a headscarf, they did not comply with it. But it is still incorrect to claim they are less religious. M005_F further held "to what extent Muslim really exerts Islam in their life [is more important]". P007_F expressed the same standpoint:

> Wearing a scarf does not make you a spiritual person. Anybody can wear a scarf, but only you know what your relation with your god is? I mean [...] on the surface people know that [you are Muslim] because non-Muslims don't wear a scarf.
>
> P007_F – Public group

P007_F insisted that outer appearance does not convey a greater religiosity influence because religiousness should only be measured in one's relation with god. In the same way, the non-compliance of religious rules should not be regarded as a disbeliever. P007_F added:

> For example, if you see people who are not wearing a *tudung* (head cover) outside (in public), they say that this person is some sort of misguided.
>
> P007_F – Public group

It can be inferred from the statement that not all Muslims adopt a *hijab*. Yet, this does not make them a disbeliever. In some places in Malaysia, wearing a *tudung* is a

253

common public feature that the non-compliance would become a site of gaze and public exclusion. The non-compliance will be stigmatised negatively that put them in the 'other' category. The assertion signifies wearing a *tudung* is a form of social expectation and social pressure (Mouser, 2007) which, as P007_F illustrated, the unveiled is accused of misguided.

Further, *hijab*-wearing does not illustrate religiousness when endorsed through government's rules. As Martinez (2001) highlighted, religious practice has been under a close scrutiny and control of the government in order to invite people to tightly hold on to the religion. P001_M stated, "Beginning of Abdullah Badawi government, all Muslim police[wo]men have to cover their head when they are on their duty". M005_M, however, criticised the restriction imposed on Muslim's appearance through this means. In a sceptical tone, M005_M said, "Malay must wear *tudung* (head cover), the *tudung* must fall long enough and the *tudung* must not be attractive. I think this brings problems in the natural construction of culture". Even as a Muslim, M005_M suggested people should be given choices of how to behave. The rules imposed on Muslims have led to the unnatural construction of Malaysian cultures. M005_M's view is relevant considering religion should be practiced based on a free will. As Hochel (2013) highlighted, *hijab*-wearing lost its religious meaning when forces apply.

Muslims' free will to practice religious belief and knowledge is in line with the conception of personhood as deliberated by Jouili (2009). Jouili explained personhood is "the ability to live one's life in accordance with one's own genuine desires, without interference from outside", (p. 464). In this notion, wearing *tudung* symbolises the freedom to articulate Muslim religious belief. Not wearing *tudung* also signifies

254

personhood since they are in charge of their own self. However, personhood may not prevail in the government institutions because people's conducts are subjected to government's control.

It is drawn from respondents' narration, although the majority of the respondents agreed that wearing hijab is a form of Islamic culture, they strongly believed that it is not a measure of religiousness. The analysis has also explored the strong emphasis on the gendered norm roles in the appearance of Muslim where instances mostly regard women and the act of covering *aurah*. This study concurs with the claim that covering *aurah* is one of the most visible forms of Muslim religious expression and identity (e.g.: Nadia, 2013; Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Brown 2006; Ehrkamp, 2005; Jouili, 2009; Henkel, 2005; Ruby, 2006). Participants' accounts further challenge the stereotypical view that *hijab* is a symbolic oppression and restriction on Muslim women's mobility (Reece, 1996; Ruby, 2006) and shorthand of the undesirable political Islam (Heath 2008, as cited in Hochel, 2013). Instead, along with Ruby (2006) and Jouili (2009), my study supports the notion the adoption and the non-adoption of *hijab* is a sign of women's ability and freedom to make their own life choices. As Ruby (2006) argued, "[a] *hijab* confirms [...] Muslim identities, provides them a chance to take control of their lives and offers them the status of respectable person" (p. 54).

7.2.4 Observing *halal* (permissible) and *haram* (harmful/forbidden)

Observing *halal* (lawful) and *haram* (prohibited) is another important theme in relation to Islamic practices conveyed by the respondents. Muslims have been provided with specific primary sources to remain aware of the aspects of *halal* and *haram* (Md

Nor and Azura Hanim, 2010). The observance of permissibility and impermissibility shows Muslims' commitment to Islam which further indicates the extent to which Muslims oblige religious canon and values (Md Nor et al., 2010). By observing *halal-haram*, Muslims negotiate and construct their religious identity.

The dichotomy of *halal-haram* is pervasive that every aspect of Muslim's life is covered through it. The most common aspect of *halal* and *haram* would be referred to food consumption. *Halal* means anything that is permissible and lawful by Islam while *haram* indicates anything that is forbidden, sinful, and punishable (Jallad, 2008). *Halal* food is anything good except that are considered *haram* such as dead animals, blood, pigs, and animal dedicated to other than Allah such as those offered for other religious belief.

The culture of food consumption in Malaysia has been embedded with Islamic values. This is mirrored in M003_F's behaviour who was aware of the *halalness* (permissibility) issue. M003_F stated:

> I'm very particular about *halal* food. I think in Malaysia we take it for granted that everybody is serving *halal* food, but that is actually not the case. When I go out, I would usually look for *halal* certification. In shopping malls, it is very hard to find places with certification. Sometimes [they have] pork free label, but that's not necessary *halal*. When I questioned the owners, they said, well its pork free, we don't serve pork or alcohol here. But that does not mean the food is *halal*. They could be using non-*halal* condiments or chicken or beef might not be slaughtered. Even [a] very popular kiosk like AA does not have *halal* certification, but when I asked them, they just told me to close [my] eyes and eat it.
>
> M003_F – Media practitioner group

It is apparent religion has influenced and shaped M003_F's dietary selection. Through her apprehensiveness over non-certified *halal* vendors, M003_F exhibited that Islamic

256

belief has guided her action. M003_F's statement further discloses the non-Muslims' stance towards Islamic ideas and moral code. The claim that it was hard to find vendors with *halal* certificate shows the acceptance of Islamic values is still low among non-Muslims. In other occasions, M003_F also expressed that some of her Muslim friends are not very particular in observing *halalness* of food. They even objected her *halal*-conscious attitude.

The notion of *halalness* was also espoused by respondents in public category. P003_F told she was asked to book a restaurant for her company's farewell party. She decided to choose a well-known eatery which is recognized to be *halal*. P003_F explained, "One of my friends said she was not going to attend the party because she was afraid it was not *halal*". Due to this, she contacted Jakim, an Islamic organisation, to get confirmation. By checking the halal status, P003_F demonstrated a sense of religious commitment (Md Nor et al., 2010) which enhanced her religious identity. However, P003_F felt her religious right was violated when she learned "the restaurant was not certified as *halal* by Jakim, but by an independent body". P003_F vented her frustration over Jakim for not being efficient in carrying out their work in promoting *halal* culture. In a way, her story illustrates the reality of the difficulty to promote *halal* culture comprehensively due to religious differences in Malaysia. It could be argued that Islamic rules may be imposed, but to what extent they are accepted varies from one group to another.

Besides Muslims, non-Muslims too can be seen to espouse the notion of *halalness*. For example, M004_F showed how she has blended with the culture of the majority. She displayed a basic Islamic knowledge about *halal-haram* and illustrated an

awareness of the kinds of food that should not be consumed by Muslims. M004_F showed her thoughtfulness in this passage:

> For example, [in] serving *halal* food, non-Muslims respect that. They know about [the] *haram* (impermissible) food such as pig and everyone knows [that] Muslims do not touch a dog. So all non-Muslims will respect.
>
> M004_F – Media practitioner group

However, it appears M004_F over-generalised that every non-Muslim understands and respects Muslims' stance about *halal* and *haram*. This contrasts with the statement given by M003_F who had been told by the owner of the AA restaurant to stop questioning the integrity of their food *halalness*. It is important to remember not every non-Muslim is concerned whether or not *halal* food is served to Muslim consumers. While a non-Muslim like M004_F may be receptive with the cultures of others, this may not be the case for other people.

Despite the idea that *halal* culture is very much blooming in the Malaysian society, one should argue that this has limited the freedom of choices among non-Muslims. It could be observed that the implementation of the *halal-haram* policy has put non-Muslims' business activities under authority's control. G001_F explained that although the selling of liquor is allowed, controls being imposed through licensing. Though this might be seen as a means to put the conducts of Muslims in check, this has indirectly prevented Muslims from expressing their individual identity. The control was also justified unnecessary by P007_F. She stated, "Muslims shouldn't be afraid of a shop selling liquor". She rationalised that non-Islamic activities should not be perceived as a threat to religious belief, rather as an acknowledgement of the right of other citizens. This is consistent with Islam which invites Muslims to respect each other

regardless of differences and appeals across geographical, racial, and cultural boundaries.

The awareness of permissibility and impermissibility as expressed by both Muslim and non-Muslim respondents has been captured through the dialectic of *halal* and *haram*. Permissibility and impermissibility become the most vigilant aspects of daily activities. It is no doubt that state's enforcement to promote *halal* culture has brought about advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, this has helped Muslims to observe their religious obligations and assert their Islamic identity. On the other hand, the *halal* culture has restricted freedom of both Muslims and non-Muslims. The imposition of *halal-haram* discussed here has, to some extent, limited the plural cultures of Malaysia since too much focus has been given to one culture that is Islam.

7.2.5 Abstinence from *riba* (interest)

Besides food consumption, the dichotomy of *halal-haram* also includes the commandment to avoid *riba* (interest or usury). *Qur'an* prohibits excessive adoration of money by doubling and multiplying or *riba* since the act might turn Muslims away from Allah. *Riba* refers to the "payment over and above what has been lent which causes the payment of interest or usury" (Gerrard and Cunningham, 1997, p. 205). In this instance, the practice of conventional bank which sets predetermined rate on deposits as well as charging interest on credit is not in line with *Shari'ah* (Chong and Liu, 2009; Forte and Miglietta, 2007). However, Islam allows the accumulation of profit through a business which is conceptually different from usury.

Chapra (2006) wrote *riba* is "essentially in conflict with the clear and unequivocal Islamic emphasis on socio-economic justice", (p. 4). The economic injustice grounded in *riba* would lead to oppression which according to M006_M has rooted in Malaysian society. Chong and Liu (2009) traced the practices of *riba* in the medieval Arabia had risked borrowers to slavery since they had no appropriate rules to protect them in the case of failed ventures. In such a case, it is justified that Islamic-approved banking system is vital to provide welfare in terms of "justice, mercy, well-being, wisdom, and stress on fraternity and equality" (Abbasi, Hollman, and Murrey Jr., 2013) as well as morality (Chong and Liu, 2009). Malaysia's economy too tried to address this issue.

Chong and Liu (2009) and Forte and Miglietta (2007) highlighted a unique facet of Islamic banking which implements profit-and-loss sharing (PLS) paradigm. In their study, Chong and Liu (2009) discovered that the practice of the Islamic banking in Malaysia is not very much different from the practice of the conventional banking system that the PLS paradigm is not fully utilised. The view was also upheld by Kamal, Ahmad, and Khalid (1999) who proposed Islamic banking seems to offer almost similar products and services that are available in conventional banking such as credit cards, current accounts, housing loans, etc. Thus, it could be suggested the practice of Islamic banking offered in Malaysia is not entirely free from *riba*. This observation was also commented upon by P004_M below:

> We are being given two choices between Islamic finance which tries to be fully Islamic, there might be 50 percent Islamic in terms [of] the way they conduct their transaction. But on the other hand, we have 100 percent which is *haram*. Between 50 percent *halal* and 100 percent *haram*, what is your choice? The choice is very clear. You don't go for the 100 percent *haram*.

P002_F likewise asserted between these two choices, "We have to choose what is offered from the Islamic banking". Remarks by P004_M and P002_F showed there should be an effort to guard oneself from indulging in totally *haram* banking. In the situation that there is no other choice, Islam provides leniency in choosing some impermissible act. Above all, the implementation of Islamic rules in banking system gives a sense of Islamic identity to the recent Islamic banking (Abbasi et al., 2013).

In this discussion, one respondent asserted her Islamic values by putting Islam as a guide in choosing a housing loan. P003_F stated:

> For a housing loan, undoubtedly if we calculate between conventional and Islamic banking plan, our monthly payment is more expensive in Islamic loan compared to [the conventional ones]. But when we sum up the total, we save more using Islamic [loan].
>
> P003_F – Public group

P003_F is observant of the prohibition of *riba* through her remarks. Her decision to choose Islamic loan over conventional banking illustrates her religious awareness. It can be inferred that P003_F's preference of Islamic banking represented her seriousness to guard her faith and to put her belief into action.

Although Malaysia has provided Islamic banking system, P004_M observed many Muslims still do not subscribe to it as compared to the non-Muslims. This, according to P004_M, is due to little faith in Allah as the provider. Gerrard and Cunningham (1997) claimed the lack of knowledge regarding the Islamic banking practice is another reason to choosing conventional banking. The adoption of Islamic banking by non-Muslims could imply that they were more aware of benefits offered by

Islamic finance. Further, this also signifies that Islam offers justice regardless of ethnic background. For these reasons, effort must be geared up to promote Islamic banking, especially to Muslims. As conventional banking and Islamic banking might be competing to attract subscribers, it is individuals' faith that would steer their decision.

Regardless of religious belief, most respondents seem to agree that Islamic banking system provides better options for their economy. The growth of Islamic-compliant financial system may have reinforced the perception that there is a need to adopt Islamic banking to give a sense that Muslims are identifying more with religious teaching. However, the degree of Muslims' acceptance of Islamic banking may vary. The discussion of *halal-haram* shows how Islamic principles dictate individual choices in financial matters.

7.2.6   Moral Principles: *Amanah* (trustworthiness), kindness, and respectfulness

Apart from specific religious obligations, individuals' moral *akhlaq* (moral behaviour) is another issue identified to help reinforce the culture of Islam. Moral *akhlaq* is important to be highlighted since its manifestation in the form of practices would influence the cultural practices of Malaysian society. The moral behaviour surfaced during the interviews was *amanah* (trustworthiness), kindness, and respectfulness. Although there were several other moral behaviour noted, these three are the most striking examples discussed by the respondents.

Ethics and morality are not inborn, rather developed through self-discipline and commitment to religious duty (Norunnajjah and Akdogan, 2012; Halstead, 2007).

262

Norunnajjah and Akdogan (2012, p. 49) recognised that strong belief in Allah "provides a sense of direction to man" which is reflected in actions. *Amanah* is a moral principle that is important in individuals' life because it demands justice in society and it influences a socio-economic life. The word *amanah* has a few meanings such as integrity, trustworthiness, and honesty, but narrowly defined as being accountable for own action before Allah (Sofiah and Md Sirajul, 2015). For the research participants, *amanah* is as important as other religious practices. As one interviewee put it:

> The problem we don't take seriously about integrity, *amanah* [such as] work extra time, give our service to people. If we are not being *amanah*, we don't consider it as un-Islamic. [For example], supposed, working hours should be eight, but we work for six hours, we rest for two hours. We don't see it wrong.
>
> M005_M – Public group

According to M005_M, some people do not regard *amanah* seriously because it doesn't carry certain format as other religious rituals. His ability to associate daily routines with Islamic values implies that life and religion are inseparable. The view further challenges the notion of western moral values which reject religious influences and rely solely on human reasoning (Norunnajjah and Akdogan, 2012) such as in the work of Kant, Mill, and Bentham (Halstead, 2007). Zubair (1988) maintained that the concept of *amanah* "seeks to convert the material ambitions of man into the means for attaining spiritual heights" as "his ultimate goal" (p. 41). Coincides with Halstead (2007), religious ideals and the reward in the hereafter become the motivating factors for individuals to display moral behaviour. This association helps people identify themselves with the teaching of Islam thus demonstrated in the form of *amanah*.

The notion of *amanah* was also articulated by PG002_R in opposition to corruption. Similar to *riba* which promotes injustice, corruption was viewed to have caused the same thing. Talking about this issue, PG002_R stated:

> Compared to us who live in a rural area, less attention [was] given to us. They have planned many aid programmes for rural people, but we could hardly see those programmed being implemented. We are not sure whether it is [because of] corruption.
>
> PG002_R – Public group

PG002_R claimed that people who live in the rural area have been neglected. The aid program in PG002_R's remarks could be assumed as financial support or development programmes that were planned and allocated for rural people. PG002_R has been aware of the situation since she also came from the rural community of Iban in which even basic infrastructures have been lacking. She further assumed it must have been due to the corruption that the aid programmes failed to be implemented.

PG002_R's statement has a basis in Noore Alam (2010) who presented a statistic of corruption activities as reported by Anti Corruption Agency (ACA). Responses from G004_M further confirmed PG002_R's assumption of the growing corrupted practices among people in power. The corruptive act in this instance is described by Hamilton-Hart (2001) as an exclusive type of crime since it involves office-holders. While it is not the office that is at fault, individuals who commit such actions should be held accountable. G004_M conveyed disappointment over corruption and misuse of powers as these are not the true picture of Islam.

It is understood that corruption refers to the failure to uphold trust (*amanah*) and causes injustices. Besides being morally wrong, corruption also has its tolls in the

264

prosperity of a nation (Noore Alam, 2010). Alesina and Angeletos (2005) likewise viewed corruption is bad for society because it involves misallocation of wealth resources which could lead to further unequal economic redistribution. Due to corruption, programmes that are supposed to aid the poor failed to be implemented (Alesina and Angeletos, 2005) hence curtailing societal development. It is vital to note that the issue of *amanah* in relation to corruption appears to be one of the prevalent concerns among respondents as it was overtly expressed in several interviews.

As shown thus far, *amanah* is strongly linked to justice. But, at the micro-level practices, as mentioned by the respondents, *amanah* has not been regarded as an important component of the moral trait. Samsudin and Islam (2015) concluded *amanah* is the quality that is needed to create exemplary people and the best society. The view is harmonious with Zubair's (1988) assertion that *amanah* is a basic component of religion without which various patterns of Islamic principles would not fit harmoniously.

Kindness is another Islamic moral virtue that emerged from participants' discussion in describing an individual trait. A variety of perspectives were expressed by respondents and care for parents was the most remarkable act of kindness deliberated. As P007_F explained:

> Nowadays you see how many old folks' home. Back then we didn't have that. We take care of our parents. That is Islam. Maybe they don't realise to be nice to parents is Islam[ic].
>
> P007_F – Public group

Respecting parents is an obligatory duty (Halstead, 2007; Muhammad and Mian Mujahid, 2013) to fulfil Allah's commandment and to thank them. P007_F's claim of the increase of old folks' home signified that people have no longer cared their parents.

In this country, sending parents to nursing homes conveys the abandonment of responsibility and the deterioration of moral virtues of kindness and compassion among human being. In fact, the care for a family member is culturally expected in Malaysia.

Care for elderly parents is addressed by different cultural groups as social and personal responsibilities (Fitzgerald, Mullavey-O'Byrne, and Clemson, 2001) and filial obligations (Han, Choi, Kim, Lee, Kim, 2008). Neglecting this responsibility will make people feel individually guilty and socially shame (Fitzgerald et al., 2001). Not only in Islam, Muhammad and Mian Mujahid (2013) also explored that goodness to parents is a collective moral virtue in Confucianism. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi (1992) further reiterated children should give more attention and consideration to parents especially when they grow old. The act of kindness to parents includes obedience and honour in which mistreatment are sinful.

The concept of kindness was also discussed by P005_M. In his example, P005_M condemned Muslims who used aggression in dealing with family matters through an example of a divorced couple. The absent of kindness justified P005_M's view not to allow the father from bringing up their children. He stated:

> Just because he becomes a Muslim, doesn't mean that we can allow a person so violent to bring up children. If I were the mother, I wouldn't allow that. Bringing up children is not only in terms of *akidah* (faith), [but] also in terms of *akhlaq* (morality and manners).
>
> P005_M – Public group

P005_M underscored that in bringing up children, *aqidah* (faith) should be complemented with good moral values. This is important since child rearing and family system hold a crucial site for producing a better image of Islam and creating a better

266

society (Stivens, 2006). P005_M's example further contests Stivens's (1996; 1998 as cited in Stivens, 2006) observation that family system in Malaysia is not structurally and morally in the state of crisis. Because by looking at the micro individual level much should be done to deal with moral issues.

Another important moral value is respectfulness. For the research participants, respect turned out to be a noteworthy concept especially in a multi-racial and multi-religious society, where disputes are more likely to crop up out of differences. Assessing respect as a religious morality (Graham and Haidt, 2010) becomes vital in the construction and restoration of harmonious communal relations replacing tolerance as it was argued that tolerance is no longer relevant to recent situation (Ruhaizah and Jaffary, 2014; Schirmer, Weidenstedt, and Reich, 2012; Van Quaquebeke, Henrich, and Eckloff, 2007). While respect has drawn an increase in attention, tolerance was unfavoured because it has been attached to "much-less-positive properties and connotations" that signals strained feeling for having to put up "with something one actually dislikes" (Schirmer et al., 2012, p. 1050).

The analysis reveals little reference was made to tolerance. Whereas, respect appears to dominate the first focus group discussion which was participated by Chinese and Indian respondents. They claimed to feel deserted from the larger social framework due to the lack of respect. PG001_E for instance said:

> Like when I go overseas […] they are more respectable, it is like my religion is my religion, your religion is your religion, we won't disturb you or provoke you. But I think we lack that in Malaysia. The Chinese and Indian students have to go away and not to drink in front of the fasting Muslim children when actually that's not what fasting is about.
>
> PG001_E – Public category

267

The feeling of being disrespected could be drawn from PG001_E's statement. PG001_E additionally accounted a sense of inferiority that other ethnic groups must respect Muslim school children during the fasting month. In view of this, disrespectfulness and inferiority would never help to nourish inter-cultural relations especially during a young age where socialisation profusely takes place.

Respect was also communicated by other participants in the same group discussion. The group uniformly suggested respect is vital for the continuation of inter-religious harmony. PG001_C from a public category told, "I mean you should never emphasise a person to practice religion if they don't want to practice it. Like JAIS (an Islamic enforcement) raiding the wedding, like you force something down someone. Look you have to do this because I say so and I'm superior to you". PG001_C invoked the lack of respect when religion has become a force on someone. She legitimised her view stating the action by the Islamic enforcement called JAIS was not appropriate especially when it comes to an individual's faith which should be a choice. In explaining this, PG001_C illustrated a case of a born Muslim who has lived a Hinduism lifestyle. It was reported that JAIS came and raided her wedding as the ceremony was conducted following a Hindu tradition. The raid was viewed by PG001_C as a sign of disrespect to other believers and that Muslims as superior to others.

In this example, disrespect could be explained in relation to injustice which leads to painful, unpleasant, and insulted feelings (Miller, 2001). An act of disrespect was further described by Miller (2001) as unjust especially when "it subjects people to something they do not deserve", (p. 533). While this damages ethnic relations between the Indian community and the majority Muslim, it would also create a bad image for

268

Islam. The fact that the same disrespectful treatment claimed by PG001_E and PG001_C has aggravated the ill-feeling of the religious and ethnic minorities is undeniable.

For this reason, I argue feeling disrespected would decrease the feeling of included and reduce cooperation in the societal network. This has been illustrated in the statements of the respondents from the government category. For example, they claimed that non-Muslims likewise display disrespectful behaviour which would become a source of conflict. G004_M stated:

> The culture of clothes is fine among Muslims, but what about among Chinese? Although there are some Muslims also follow other cultures, it's not that I don't mind. But letting it happens is actually wrong. From the Minor Offences Act, wearing indecently in public is actually wrong.
>
> G004_M – Government group

G004_M's expression could be regarded as moralistic anger (line intrusion) provoked by norm violation (Miller, 2001) in the form of indecent appearance. Borrowing from Durkheim (1964), Miller (2001) claimed when "an in-group member disrespects the group values (as opposed to specific laws or rules), these people will [...] experience moralistic anger" only that it is not openly expressed since rejection of value is not directly punishable (p. 535).

The disrespectful behaviour of non-Muslims was also accounted by G003_M and G001_F from the same respondent group in relation to the use of the term Allah by one Christianity newsletter. G003_M and G001_F emphasised their apprehension of inter-racial relations by locating issue which is considered as sensitive to majority Muslims. G001_M for example commented:

The sensitivity of Muslim is huge on this. They opposed [the] use of the word Allah in the Christian newsletter. Sensitivity is very much deep to the bottom of their heart. If the majority of the Muslims do not like it, they should not use the word, because another formula is that, freedom of religion in Malaysia must be within the formula of peace and harmony. If this breaks the principle of peace and harmony, that will be the end of our racial relations that we are talking about.

G001_F − Government group

Similar to the assertion above, the issue of sensitivity was addressed by Abdul Muati (2010) who underlined that given the diversity nature of Malaysia, "sensitive issues like religion and race can escalate tension and conflict" (p. 46). Committing something sensitive in G001_F's claim could be read as a marker of disrespectfulness since it leads to undesirable feeling between different ethnic groups. In this sense, the key to maintaining inter-racial relations is by respecting each other's sensitivities. Despite this argument, it seems that the minority groups appear to have always complied and acted within the approval of the majority. While, the majority group should always be perceived superior and must be respected in the community. This might not be an ideal inter-relation strategy since it shows a one-way interaction where the only giving party is the minority group.

So far, most of the experiences shared by the participants illustrate occurrences of disrespectful behaviour which points that the moral virtue of respect has been poorly reflected in individuals' moral principle. The situation occurs because people reacted based on whether they feel included within a social group (Tyler and Smith, 1999 and Brewer, 1991, cited in De Cremer, 2002). If they feel disrespected, they would be less likely to display positive behaviour in favour of group's interest. In this account, the Muslims are the core group members while the non-Muslims are the peripheral group

270

members (De Cremer, 2002). Since the non-Muslims (peripheral group) feel that their rights are not fully respected (e.g. statements by PG001_E and PG001_C), as retaliations, they display behaviour which is felt to be disrespectful to Muslims (e.g. statements by G001_F, G003_M, and G004_M).

The situation above has portrayed the non-Muslims as the 'other', whereas the majority Muslim as 'us'. The Muslims, in this example, portray themselves to be under the attack of the non-Muslim minority or the 'other'. The main analysis offered in this section has drawn attention to what counts as respectful and decent behaviours versus disrespectful and improper behaviours for the maintenance of inter-racial understanding. In short, the consideration of respect is vital to enhance and integrate group relations which require mutual approval between two parties (Ruhaizah and Jaffary, 2014).

7.3   Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated how an understanding of an 'everyday conducts' category provides an insight into communal and individual practices of Islam. This chapter has presented how the state's implementation of Islam has shaped the practices at the communal level. While at the individual level, the chapter demonstrates how Islamic practices dictate the lives of Muslims and describes the meaning behind certain practices. It further discusses how Islamic practices are treated with regard to cultural framing.

The major Islamic signs in the society indicate Islam has been much ingrained as collective life ways which negate Shamsul's (2010) allegation that *Shari'ah* law is

merely a symbol in the country. An observation at the societal level has disclosed Islamic values and norms have been vigorously promoted to inculcate a sense of Islamic identity in the Malaysian society. It could be suggested that the institutionalisation of Islam by the state has brought about the influence of Islam which has enriched Malaysian cultures. As noted in the previous chapter, before the coming of Islam, different cultural values were dominant in Malaya (presently known as Malaysia). The revival of Islam has therefore created a society with a mix of different cultural practices which Islamic cultures as the prevailing ones. In relation to this, the narratives of this research do not fit western's claim that religious belief has lost its cultural relevance (Kilp, 2011) since religion continues to be upheld as the state ideology to serve as a basis of the country's practices, especially politics.

At an individual level, the results show the complexity of meanings of Islamic cultures since they are individually assigned. The embedment of Islamic cultures has been examined based on the respondents' narratives of Islamic belief, practices, and moral principles. They are explored since their manifestations are observable in the form of practices which influence and reinforce Islamic cultures in Malaysia. It could be argued from the data that Islamic cultures appear to be dominantly embedded in the lives of some Muslims and non-Muslims with the exception of the moral virtues. Among the values articulated by respondents which were discussed from an Islamic perspective are trustworthiness, kindness, and respectfulness. It is learned that moral virtues or Islamic moral values have not been strongly observed by people.

The analysis of individual practices has exposed how Islam has influenced Muslims' lives such as in the visible practice of prayer, hijab-wearing, eating *halal* food,

and the abstinence from interest or *riba'*. For example, as Fischler (1988) wrote, eating a certain kind of food could identify to which groups someone belongs to. By selecting *halal* (permissible) foods, individuals confess their Islamic identity. Similarly, the act of *hijab*-wearing is culturally significant since it is not only religiously motivated but also acts to symbolically affirming the cultural identity of a Malay-Muslim. Unlike in Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, and Howarth (2012) which reported Muslims in Indonesia were not pressurised to work out their identity since they were the majority as opposed to Muslims minority in India. This research found that although Muslims are the majority, they have to comply with the state's rule in affirming their Islamic identity in order to uphold the country's Islamic title. In this regard, I argue, to some extent, some majority Muslims are forced into constructing their cultural identity in asserting overt differences. While some others continue to embrace personhood, a form of freedom in expressing their Islamic identity.

Overall, it has been demonstrated that the cultural practices drawn throughout this chapter are related to a religious identity. As shown, respondents' narratives of faith as a freewill proclamation and religious practices as an individual commitment have assisted in the construction of identity among the Malays. Identity is shifting, undergoing constant external and internal reinforcement (Peek, 2005; Smith, 2010; McMullen, 2000; Dillon 1999) and is defined as an "individuals' sense of self, group affiliations, structural positions, and ascribed and achieved statuses", (Peek, 2005, p. 217). In the context of Malaysia, Islam has been assigned to the Malay ethnic identity. This religious-ethnic identity provides a strong tool to set boundaries between Malay ethnicity from other ethnic groups.

From Franz Fanon's (1986, cited in Woodward, 2004) view of identities, this process is known as racialisation or ethnicisation. Racialisation and ethnicisation involve social and psychological processes that put people and groups into certain racial and ethnic categories (Woodward, 2004). According to Woodward (2004), ethnicisation refers to the dynamic processes of constructing the ethnic identity of people based on their common cultural practices, language, and nationality. In this notion, the embedment of Islamic practices in the ethnic Malay identity could be argued as a form of ethnicisation that differentiates them from other ethnicities. The importance of religion is further shown by Mitchell (2006) who argued religion does not simply support the ethnic focus. Rather there should be a two-way causal relationship between religion and ethnicity which the religious dimension of identity could induce changes in ethnic identity. Therefore, identity becomes simultaneously informed by religious and ethnic content. On this premise, the view that religion only plays a peripheral role as claimed by Barr and Govindasamy (2010) and Miller (2004) is disputable.

By looking at the data in the present and previous chapters, it is true that Islam appears to be the most widely professed religion and dominant culture through its adoption. The repetitiveness and visibility of Islamic practices as compared to other religions further show the prevailing Islamic cultures. The Islamic banking system, the Islamic TV programmes, and the strong emphasis on Islamic education have also contributed to the saliency of Islamic cultures. Other religious practices such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Hinduism have not been given much attention to be upheld to the mainstream level. If these religions perceived to be outstanding, actions will be taken by the authority to curtail their exposure.

It is further learned from this chapter that some Islamic rules and practices have put the ethnic relations into complex situations. For example, the identification of Malay and Islam has led to the portrayal of other ethnic groups as the 'other'. When too much emphasis has been given to Islam (us), other religious practices (other) have been side-lined. Through the 'otherness', inter-religious understanding between the majority and the minority groups could be claimed weaker as they see themselves struggling to be heard. The 'us' and 'other' dichotomy and the inter-religious issues will be scrutinised in length in Chapter 8.

As an insider in this culture, it could be noted that the Islamic norms regulate Muslims' activities in meaningful ways for some Muslims but not for the non-Muslims. With all eyes on Islam, integration and social cohesion might be challenging. This is coupled with the hesitancy of the majority group or the host society in appreciating cultural differences (Rudiger et al., 2003). Although pressures to assimilate socially and politically persist, there is no monolithic culture could be observed in the real Malaysian society. While efforts have been vigorous to make Islam as the main culture, this is still not quite successful due to the multi-culturalism of the Malaysian society; hence Malaysia remains a deeply divided society as proposed by some researchers (e.g.: Subramaniam, 2011; Haque, 2003; Soon, Azirah, and Buttny, 2015).

I concur the view that Islamic practices are varied by culture and context (Avruch 1998; Hochel, 2013). The present chapter is not to provide complete criteria of what constituting Islamic cultures, rather an illustration of what participants thought of as important. Therefore, the research finding might be limited in its generalisation due to

its locally-derived explanation. In the next chapter, I will explore the contestation of other ethnic groups in relation to Malay-Islam's preferential position in detailed.

CHAPTER 8: CONTESTING FEATURES ON MALAY-ISLAM'S PREFERENTIAL STATUS AND POLICIES
"We are the Majority; You Need to Understand us", (P004_M).

8.0   Introduction

The previous empirical chapters have illustrated the elements of Islamic cultures in the political sphere and larger societal context of Malaysia. The imposition of Islamic policies and preferential status of Malays has powerfully shaped the political aspect of Malaysia which is reflected in the practices of the Malaysian society. The chapters have also outlined the authority-defined and everyday-defined views in discussing domains within which Islamic cultures are presented. Discussions presented in both chapters generally illustrate how Islamic values are broadly culturally and locally rooted, embedded in politics, culture, and tradition of the Malaysian society.

In this chapter, I will probe on challenges confronted as a result of the construction of Islam's and Malay's preferential status. This chapter contends that there is some form of resistance from the public to the state's hegemonic position. It explores public contestations on the Malay-Islam's special position through politics and ethnic arrangement, education and language, economics and business, religious issues, and cultural practices. The contestations disclose the marginalisation and discrimination of non-Muslims due to the institutionalisation of Islamic and Malay-oriented policies.

Two types of NGOs are also highlighted in the final section before conclusions. The discussion provides an illustration to Gramsci's assertion that civil society is a site of inequality and contestation between the forces of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

277

In Chapter 6, civil society could be seen urging the government to focus on Islamic agenda. Whereas, in this chapter, civil society will be presented as challenging state's hegemony as learned from Gramsci.

This chapter aims to give voice to the public or 'subaltern voices' (Shamsul, 1996) regardless of whether they are non-*bumiputra* or 'subordinated' races (Barr and Govindasamy, 2006; 2010) or *bumiputra,* to express their experiences in contrast to the elite constructions or 'public transcript' (Martinez, 2001) mostly presented in Chapter 6. In this section, I intend to provide a balanced account on the detailed micro level version of, and unconventional perspectives that surfaced from, social actors. This part will reveal the alternative or dissenting reality on the ground and multidimensional understanding of issues related to the dominance of Malay and Islam that become apparent as respondents' data are explored.

In general, participants expressed forms of ethnicisation, as suggested by Hall (1997) and Fanon (cited in Woodward, 2004), that they perceived as curbing the integration among ethnic groups. As Stark (2006) observed, the main preoccupation of Malaysian government has been to constructing and defining an identity of the majority in detriment to the exclusion of minorities. This chapter suggests that the appropriation of Islamic ideology and Malay-centred *Bumiputra* policies has had an impact on the multi-ethnic nature of Malaysian society. The essence of the discussion captures the problematic relationship between the Malays and the other races. Chapter 8 generally tries to answer the underlying research question:

RQ3: What are the challenges in the construction and maintenance of the

preferential status of Islam-Malay and its cultures in Malaysia?

8.1   Politics and Ethnic Arrangement

The research participants expressed the practice of ethnic marginalisation which is rooted in Malay-centred *bumiputra* policies. Respondents' contestation could be understood by looking at the divide and rule policy by British. Deep social frictions have been interwoven in the policy affecting Malays in rural areas leaving them economically disadvantaged despite their native identity. To compensate this, British introduced bargaining policies which granted the Malays with definitive position or a symbolic form of Malay privileges. British also granted a legitimate interest of ethnic minorities, mainly Chinese and Indian immigrants, in the forms of rights to citizenship, economy, and residence in the post-colonial Malaya (Zawawi, 2004; Stark, 2006).

The definitive (special) position (Reid, 2001; Salleh, 2005) in the form of preferential policies (Haque, 2003) was justified by British colonialist as a means to safeguard Malay rulers' welfare and Malay tradition which they claimed was disrupted by immigrants' practices (Means, 1986 as cited in Haque, 2003). One of the striking Malay's preferential policies was illustrated in the country's name at that time, *Tanah Melayu* (Malay Land) (Stark, 2006). Preferential policies could also be understood through the notion of *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy) which marked an explicit arrangement between *bumiputra* and non-*bumiputra* in the Federal Constitution through abundant access to special privileges in the former (Balasubramaniam, 2007; Shamsul 2001).

Bumiputra literally means 'sons of the soil' or "an official term [that] covers Muslim Malays and the small number of non-Muslim aborigines in the Peninsula and tribal people of the east" (Henderson, 2003, p. 450); while non-*bumiputra* refers to ethnic Chinese, Indian, and other non-indigenous people. Mohd Muzhafar, Ruzy, and Raihanah (2015) disclosed a careful reading of *bumiputra* means to "differentiate and distance Malayness from other social class and ethnicities" that describes entitlement and superiority (p.2). Under this arrangement, Malay enjoys better social status as compared to other ethnicities. This is observed through the prominence of culture, custom, tradition, religion, language, and values of the Malays from others (Stark, 2006). The majority of the respondents claimed this arrangement have deepened ethnic marginalisation and refrained from absolute integration between *bumiputra* and non-*bumiputra*.

According to some respondents, the ethnic cleavage was furthered with the implementation of an affirmative action programme designed for the Malay and *bumiputra* known as the New Economic Policy (NEP) shortly after the May 13th, 1969 racial riots. The main objective of the NEP was to achieve national unity through a two-pronged approach. The first prong was directed towards poverty eradication by restructuring society through disentanglement of "ethnic identification with particular economic functions" (Embong, 2002, p. 51) and to provide justice to the then economically depressed Malay. While the second prong focused on restructuring wealth and ownership. Estimated to run for 20 years, the NEP was planned to "increase *bumiputra* participation in the modern economy, including restrictions on the floatation of share capital and the awarding of government contracts" (Brown, 2007, p. 321).

However, it was argued that the NEP was more towards fulfilling the needs and to elevate Malay capitalist and Malay special interest (Zawawi, 2004; Rusnak, 2012; Haque, 2003; Stark, 2006). Instead of mediating inter-ethnic tension, the NEP served as a "state-imposed racial categorisation" tool (Stark, 2006, p. 387) that magnified "the interests or privileges of Malays as the dominant group in terms of its greater special rights or preferences" (Haque, 2003, p. 245). As Ramasamy (2004) put it, the NEP symbolised a shift in "a multi-racial framework to a political ideology that was based on the interests of one ethnic group [such as] the concept of Malay dominance", (p. 208).

As Malay hegemonic position has been strengthened, minority groups continue to be sidelined from the core nation. This was highlighted by many respondents especially the non-*bumiputra* from the general public category. They argued, due to the government strong emphasis on Malay privileges, not only other ethnic minority was side-lined, but "Islam's wider philosophical dimensions and principles" such as equity, justice, and its universal reality also suffered the same fate (Yousif, 2004, p. 33). Respondents regardless of ethnic background were binding about this. P007_F for instance openly rejected the practice of special right in her phrase:

> To me giving special rights for *bumiputra* is against Islam. It is the same as *jahiliyah* (ignorance) time. Because Malays are Muslims so [people think] it is ok to give rights to Muslims. That is wrong.
>
> P007_F – Public category

In this statement, giving special rights is not according to the Islamic teaching of justice and equality since it has marginalised ethnic minorities. The marginal position of minority groups in relation to a core group could be assumed from the dichotomy of 'other' and 'us' (Brown, 2004). In the pre-colonial period, Embong (2002) described the

'other' consisted of travellers, pastors, and traders who were accepted, accommodated, and even welcomed within indigenous public culture. These people spread their cultures and religions which were later adopted by indigenous people.

In contrast to the recent social setting, the notion of the 'other' has been seen as an oppressed group whose identity is reactively formed against the 'us' (Brown, 2004). Brown explained, the 'us' in this view is pure, while the 'other' is perceived as a threat and impure. Kilp (2011) correspondingly defined the 'other' is constructed "by subjective feelings of insecurity, chaos, and vulnerability" of 'us' (p. 197). Hall (1997) proposed the 'otherness' is marked through 'difference' because of its salient appeal. The 'difference' is constructed by representing people "who are racially and ethnically different from the majority population" which eventually leads to symbolic boundaries (Hall, 1997, p. 230). In this sense, 'difference' is essential for the successful construction of the 'other' which will be presented throughout this chapter.

Based on the current volatile majority-minority relation, the account offered by Brown, Kilp and Hall aptly explain the 'other' in the context of Malaysia. Ethnic inequality was repeatedly alleged by participants that the inclusion of other ethnicities to the core ethnic was seen unfavourable. For instance, the notion of the 'otherness' with a prejudicial statement was represented in a government-owned media. M004_F claimed, following the 13th general election, a mainstream newspaper highlighted a front-page story titled "*Apa lagi Cina Mahu*? [What else do the Chinese want?]". As a Chinese reporter, M004_F articulated her disappointment of the newspaper's biases towards Chinese. From the Malaysian perspectives, calling minority groups by their racial identity is derogatory as it equates racial sentiment and accentuates their 'difference'

from the majority group. The word *Cina*/Chinese conveys derogatory sense because it could be highly emotional in the context of the news. The reading through the headline reveals Chinese was just an outsider and should accept their peripheral position as the 'other'. The news also infers the Chinese should be grateful for many things done by the government for their ethnic group. It is found Afif Pasuni quoted the same headline in explaining the racial politics in the aftermath of the 13th general election (Afif, 2014). This refutes Azirah's (2009) claim that the term Chinese does not carry a negative connotation. In this sense, the meaning of Chinese is fluid and should be examined based on the context of the expression.

In a way, the 'othering' by the government served to disguise its present and past actions from being evaluated by the core population, that is the Malay (Kilp, 2011). As argued by Martinez (2001), the format of the newspaper that has been slanted towards ruling coalition's voice disclosed its embedded meaning of the 'otherness'. The media in this example produces "preferred meanings" that appear to favour "existing economic, political, and social power relations", (Ang, 1996, p. 138) to reinforce dominant political norms. Bailey and Harindranath (2007) argued, although media representations are significant in the political and cultural sphere through their active constructions of meaning, they do not necessarily reproduce social reality. Instead of describing, the media ascribe meanings to events and reality (Hall, 1997) which could powerfully diffuse certain 'ideological effect' (Hall, 1977). In this assertion, the media is potentially manipulated by the state to propagate the 'otherness'. It is vital to argue that the issue of the 'other' signifies the fact that the media has not yet been able to challenge the state ideology. State propaganda continue to shape news representations of the 'other', in

particular, the majority versus the minority ensures the persistence of the dichotomy of 'us' and 'other'

The collective prejudice of the impure 'other' was also articulated by other interviewees. For example, political discourses often represent minority groups as an alleged threat to the special position of Malay and Islam so that the majority Muslims will develop negative views against other ethnicities. Non-*bumiputra* respondents were in the defensive position when they were accused of demanding equal rights to *bumiputra*. They were also called trespassers who have the intention to rob the Malay Muslims' wealth. According to my respondents, the majority group is put against the minority groups especially with regards to the Islamic issues. This is seen as an effective subject matter for the elite to gain political mileage. M003_F, for example, stated, "In our politics, I always find that Islam is used [by politicians] to get what they want. They can manipulate and use it the wrong way sometimes". M003_F against this practice considering injustices that have been sustained not only by other ethnic groups but also by Islam.

Several respondents expressed that the political and media projection of 'us' and 'other' has been absorbed by some Malays. This kind of sentiment has instigated hatred that reinforces the marginalisation of minority groups. Since the representation of the 'other' helps nurtures unification and preserves positive feelings among 'us' (Kilp, 2011), this is particularly important for the Malay political hegemony. As Brown (2004) put forward, "the moral 'us' and the immoral 'other' has the capacity to act as an independent causal factor so as to deepen and potentially to change, political confrontation" between two groups (p. 7).

In view of this discussion, the 'otherness' is powerful to the social construction of identity. Without the 'other', the self 'us' would not be constructed since the former is formed as a result of a negative feeling of the latter (Kilp, 2011). Hall's (1997) and Kilp's (2011) theoretical explanations are, indeed, useful to the understanding of the binary opposition between 'other' and 'us' in relation to the majority-minority discourse in Malaysia. The construction and perpetuation of power relations that split 'us' from 'them' in the example explored in this section could be argued as a kind of racialisation and ethnicisation as maintained by Hall (1997), Franz Fanon (cited in Woodward, 2004), and Zembylas (2010) since it helps to set boundaries between racial group.

8.2 Education and Language

Another domain that discusses the public contention against Malay-Islam's privileged policies is education and language. It has been illustrated in the everyday-defined scripts of non-*bumiputra* respondents that the 'other' group is discriminated in education and language. Education was one of the important areas addressed in the NEP following the 1969 riots (Brown, 2007). Brown (2007) explained, education aims towards wiping out inter-ethnic economic inequality especially by correcting Malay socio-economic backwardness. A Malay privilege on education is protected under the Federal Constitution that reserves Malay students' places in higher education institutions (Government of Malaysia, 1977 as cited in Haque, 2003) to the exclusion of other ethnicities. Selvaratnam (1988) claimed this as a contentious tactic of increasing Malay educational credentials. In commenting about rights to education, PG001_F articulated a discriminative practice faced by other ethnic groups:

285

> Muslims will be given like whatever they require [when] apply[ing] for polytechnics (post-secondary institution) and all other [higher educational] institutions. But for other races they will give like, Diploma in *Penternakan* (farming course) or some unknown courses that we have never heard of. I think it is totally unfair.
>
> PG001_F – Public group

PG001_F disclosed the unequal opportunity to higher education access. Even though it was argued by one government authority that entrance to higher education is based on a merit system, PG001_F's claim revealed otherwise. The merit-based rule for university's enrolment is, in fact, dubious since admission for the 'other' group seemed to be stricter (Balasubramaniam, 2007) which suggested Malay-reserved quota has been still widely practiced. PG001_F further pointed out that a quota practice also involved high-ranked courses such as a medical study in which non-*bumiputra* could never compete with other qualified applicants as well as those with special status. M004_F illustrated a more specific instance of discrimination between the majority and the minority individuals. She narrated:

> Two people applied for a scholarship from Petronas. They had to seat in an evaluation test. The Chinese scored higher than the Malay, but the one who got the scholarship was the Malay on the basis that 'you are Chinese' [that you were disqualified].
>
> M004_F - Media group

This is a clear example of a discriminative practice since the test was only served as a formal requirement.

Brown (2007) reported that government's funds have been allocated mainly for *bumiputra*. Between 1980 and 1984, only 5 percent of overseas study awards were granted to non-*bumiputra* (Brown, 2007). For P004_M, this was an unfair practice because the government will "end up of giving more opportunity to people who don't

286

deserve it". Many respondents viewed the system as lose-lose situation since not only the qualified is denied their rights but also a waste of country's funds for sponsoring disqualified individuals. The government's plan in ensuring Malay's better economic position could be argued effective if looking at Sriskandarajah's (2005) report on the significant increase of post-secondary education among Malays aged above 20 as opposed to Chinese and Indian ethnic groups. However, the preferential policies implemented in the form of quota system (Chua, 2000 and Mah, 1985, cited in Haque, 2003) and a study-abroad programme (Mohd Muzhafar et al., 2015) for the Malays have an adverse impact on non-*bumiputra*'s rights.

In respect to education, language is another issue that plays a tremendous role in facilitating Malay students to progress in schools (Selvaratnam, 1988). During the British colonisation, English was used as a language of instruction in education. The growing contention over which language should be given an official status (Azirah, 2009) had facilitated the government to impose in all national schools the use of *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language) as a medium of instruction replacing the English language (Selvaratnam, 1988). This situation has led to two types of primary schools − national school and vernacular (national-type) school (Azirah, 2009) which the later uses either Tamil or Chinese language as its main language of instruction.

Though, Azirah (2009) argued education and language policies have given relatively low contribution in integrating different ethnic groups and have neither accelerated a common national identity based on a small number of Chinese and Tamil students in national schools. Even, the Chinese community has been given leeway to manage their own education since colonial period (Embong, 2002). Until today, national

schools use *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language) as the only language of instruction while vernacular schools retain its mother tongue language either Tamil or Chinese while some adopt English. Given what language vernacular schools adopt, *Bahasa Melayu* remains a compulsory subject (Azirah, 2009). In a way, it seems that the government has put dominant emphasis on the use of the Malay language without seeing the importance of learning other languages too.

As Chinese, P004_M and P005_M accept the fact that some non-Malays especially Chinese are hesitant in accepting the status of the Malay language as a national language. P005_M stated:

> They are so much into competing with the Malay race; they have forgotten that they have to preserve national identity as Malaysian. And the main way to preserve the national identity is to speak the Malay language.
>
> P005_M – Public category

It could be inferred from P005_M's claim that the non-Malays are reluctant to choose national schools because of the use of Malay language as the only medium of instruction. This could be due to a strong sense of safeguarding their ethnic identity. This assumption corresponds with Lee, Lee, Wong, and Azizah (2010) who pointed out by learning their own languages, Chinese and Indian could ensure "a revival of pride and interest in their ethnic and cultural identity", (p. 88). M004_F and P004_M also suggested a vernacular school is a place where non-Malays could learn their own languages. They argued this is essential to suit their linguistic background. The examples illustrated here could be suggested as a subtle contestation since vernacular schools could become a means to construct and maintain the non-Malays' cultural identity in ways that enhance their group belonging and difference from the larger

society. In a way, the efforts to indigenise the education policy towards fulfilling Malays' privileges (Selvaratnam, 1988) have strengthened non-*bumiputra*'s urge to protect and maintain vernacular schools.

Despite having vernacular schools, 'otherness' is still maintained. Brown (2007) revealed vernacular schools have received little financial support from the government as compared to national schools. As implied in the statement of G003_M, the government only focuses on controlling and monitoring vernacular schools' activities and programmes to be tailored within a specific national educational programme. The control is manifested through the syllabus, training and the selection of teachers under the Malaysian Ministry of Education's (MOE).

Tan (2000) also observed that the government tried to alter vernacular schools' character, in this case, Chinese schools, when approximately 90 non-Chinese language educated teachers were promoted to senior positions. Although the decision was withdrawn following a strong Chinese protest, this could be seen as an attempt to uplift Malay's position in vernacular schools. A similar example was expressed by G003_M when "religious education was introduced in Chinese schools" (G003_M) which shows state's effort to impose Islamic position in vernacular schools.

The discussion illustrated in this section showed how the *bumiputra*-centred status has resulted in the subordination of non-*bumiputra* in the educational sphere thus inhibiting integration among ethnicities. Government's ethnic-oriented policies in education have enhanced Malay's socio-economic position which to some extent has deepened a sense of the 'otherness'. Brown (2007) further maintained Malaysian public

education has not only been used to foster a sense of belonging among Malays to a country's nationalism but also has become a tool to pursuing the interest of the Malay ethnicity. Here, education and language disputes are significantly associated with the issue of ethnicity rather than Islam.

8.3   Economics and Business

Participants further coined out situations that place Malays in a favourable position in economics and business aspects. Unequal economic distribution in terms of business quota reservation, Malay continuous support, and assurance of Malay's economic privileges was discussed. Since any discussion of a current socio-economic condition is meaningfully situated within the history of the NEP (Kadir, 1982), this part will address some of the Malay's struggles to achieve the NEP's second objective; wealth and ownership redistribution.

After 20 years of the NEP's implementation, *bumiputra* were expected to own assets in a corporate sector by 30 percent, while Indian and Chinese should only make up 20 percent of the shares and the remaining 30 percent was allocated for foreign equity (Snodgrass, 1995; Gomez, 2012). Before the implementation of this affirmative action, foreign ownership of Malaysian corporate equity was overwhelmed and even up rivalled Chinese ownership and control of major firms (Gomez, 2012). The success of the NEP could be observed when foreign equity ownership was reduced from 63.4 percent to 25.4 percent, while *bumiputra* corporate ownership and management rose dramatically from 1.5 percent to 20.3 in 1990 (Gomez, 2012). "New statutory bodies, government corporations, government-owned or controlled publicly listed companies as

well as government-owned or controlled private companies" were among the means through which the objective was realised (Jomo and Tan, 2003, p. 3).

In 1975, government introduced the Industrial Coordination Act which details out "any non-Malay firm with capital and reserves funds worth more than M$250,000 (Malaysian dollars) and more than 25 employees must demonstrate at least 30 percent *bumiputra* equity ownership or participation to get business licenses approved or renewed" (Lee, 2000 as cited by Haque, 2003). The requirements made under this policy raised huge dissatisfaction among non-*bumiputra*. As pointed out by one focus group's respondent:

> If you want to open up a business, you need a *bumiputra* partner. I think that is unnecessary for you to do. It is about your own effort your own hard work. Why is it a must for you to have a *bumiputra* partner?
> PG001_F – Public group

One of the reasons mentioned in the first group discussion why Malays were not sought after as business partners was due to their lack of business skills. Crouch (1996) asserted, for Chinese business people, a good political link which the Malays usually had, was least desired because of business skills and capital weight more importance in ensuring successful industry. Referring to PG001_F's illustration, non-*bumiputra* have no choice since "license, permits, leases, credits, contracts, and concessions" were easily approved when there were Malay partners as compared to when the enterprise was purely Chinese (Crouch, 1996, p. 207). The ethnic-centred policy clearly unaccommodating and sometimes troublesome to the minority.

Koon (1997, p. 273) asserted, the dramatic rise of "Malay employment and equity ownership in private sector urban industries struck at the very heart of Chinese

business interests". P001_M argued this has prompted the Chinese to migrate to other countries. He accounted six out of 50 of his Chinese classmates have migrated to other countries to explore wider business link and find better economic opportunities and security. As is clear, the NEP led to economically-deprived situations for most Chinese business people. Koon (1997) observed that industries such as construction, transportation, and distribution which were traditionally controlled by Chinese have been reserved for Malays leaving them little hope for future. For this reason, Snodgrass (1995) argued the NEP caused "some loss of opportunity to improve one's job or increase one's income or business", (p. 7), especially for a Chinese businessman.

Although the majority of the participants believed that Chinese appeared to monopolise a business sector, P001_M viewed otherwise. He commented:

> If we look back 30 years ago it might be true. But now, it is not true. The 10 largest companies in Malaysia based on KL share market are not dominated by a single Chinese, Chinese workers or Chinese leaders.
>
> P001_M – Public group

P001_M tried to highlight the need to differentiate between individual business ownership and large corporate ownership in order to claim whether or not Chinese monopolises business. For P001_M, it was unfair to claim Chinese outshines *bumiputra* in business by only looking at a small-medium industry. Snodgrass (1995) explained Chinese ownership of corporations was growing rapidly after the implementation of the NEP, but they were not owned and managed solely by Chinese rather a joint ownership. The view that the ethnic Chinese should remain discriminated in the economic ownership which heightens their 'otherness' position was embedded in M002_F's statement:

Everyone knows that economy is number one in any country. So if the Chinese controls economy, it is no doubt that this country will become a Chinese country because they know their own advantage.

M002_F – Media group

According to PG002_R, although the NEP was implemented to eradicate poverty, she viewed "other *bumiputra* ethnic groups (such as Indigenous Iban) were still marginalised. The government only helped the Malays". In this contention, even though the NEP adopted the term *bumiputra* to reduce its obvious Malay-oriented policy (Nagata, 1980; Stark, 2006; Balasubramanian, 2007), PG002_R's claim is contradicted. Constitutionally, besides Malay, the definition of *bumiputra* includes other non-Muslim indigenous minorities in the Peninsula and tribal groups in the east. In this accord, the inclusion of other ethnic minority in *bumiputra'*s definition is a mere constitutional record, not a reality.

Crouch (1996) concluded, the NEP's initial objective of reorganising material benefits between *bumiputra* and non-*bumiputra* came with an ethinicised baggage of privileging Malay status. Since *bumiputra* equity had not achieved its 30 percent target, Gomez (2012) argued it was used as a basis for the continuation of the NEP even after 1990. As stated by several Chinese respondents, this has heightened discontent among non-*bumipura* especially among the Chinese who believed this as Malay's political attempt to expand political hegemony.

To some extent, Malay-oriented economic policies have worked to the disadvantage of the Malay ethnicity. P007_F for instance commented in terms of salary, "Whenever you work in [a] private sector, if the owner is Chinese, of course as Malay you get less salary whether you are in the same position". In P007_F's illustration, the

293

Malay is treated differently in non-*bumiputra* owned corporations could be viewed as a negative consequence of having to accommodate government policy by making room for Malays in the non-*bumiputra* industry.

The examples presented in this section have demonstrated how non-*bumiputra* has been discriminated through the government inter-ethnic redistributive policies particularly, as Jomo and Tan (2003) claimed, in the accumulation of Malay wealth. The ethnicised policy is argued by Lee is based on the notion that since the Malay *bumiputra* is an indigenous people, they should rightfully own the national economy (2000, as cited by Haque, 2003).

8.4   Religious Issues

There is no doubt that the diversity nature of Malaysian population has been a cause of conflict and tension in ethno-religious relations (Embong, 2002). This is deepened when Islam has been engraved in the already complex multi-racial society beginning of the Mahathir administration. The embedment of Islam in the state's framework aims to mould society according to Islamic ideals and values (Yousif, 2004). Without pressures from the opposition parties, Islamic movements, and public, Islam would not have been such a significant ideology in Malaysia. As Malay Muslims are the predominant part of the population, they enjoy special treatment and state resources in comparison to other residents. However, too much focus on Islamic matters has ignited many contested issues which are explored below.

Article 160 (2) of the Federal Constitution specifies the association between race

and religion (Haque, 2003; Tamir, 2013). As already discussed in Chapter 6, during the dramatic Islamisation period, Malayness was intensely fused with a religious label (Yousif, 2004; Stivens, 2010; Tamir, 2013). This section will further detail out the contentions against Islam-Malay identity from the public perspectives.

The Malay-Islam identity could be justified to be parochial to the Malays because it has restricted Malays' religious choice. M005_M criticised the compulsion of professing Islamic identity by birth in the following lines:

> In fact, we know that anthropologically [and] culturally speaking this cannot be done. Malays can be Christian, atheist, Hindu and whatever. So the [attachment of Malay-Islam] becomes a legal constraint to the construction of Malay identity.
> M005_M – Media practitioner

M005's unfavourable view on the rigid Malay Muslim identity is based on the reality that identity is constructed through a natural process of socialisation (Peek, 2005) influenced by socially learned and acquired knowledge. Other respondents from the public category also confirmed this view. They argued that the assignment of Islam in ethnic Malay has severely curtailed the natural development of Malay identity and culture. Malay is not allowed to convert to other religions as portrayed in a high profile conversion case of Lina Joy and Nor'aishah bte Bokhari (Maznah 2010b; Tamir 2013; Whiting, 2013; Helwa and Jasri, 2013).

It is noteworthy, however, unlike Malays, non-Muslims are permitted to experimenting any religious doctrines and practices and free to shift from one belief system to another (Lee, 1993 as cited in Yousif, 2004). Cases of non-Muslims' conversion from Islam to old religions as acknowledged by respondents being recorded by Jakim indicates they have more freedom in choosing faith.

Besides this policy, other Islamic regulations have also contributed to despondency among non-*bumiputra* (Haque, 2003). The respondents revealed how *Shari'ah* prerogatives impinged on non-Muslims' rights. In prompting discussions, respondents were invited to point out well-publicised cases which they saw pertinent to religious issues such as conversion, divorce, and child custody that had a collective impact. Few of them discussed in terms of legal consequences of court cases involving a jurisdictional dispute between *Shari'ah* and common law. They appeared to display a clear understanding of cases complexity and details. For example, P005_M and M001_M recounted a case of a non-Muslim woman, Indira Gandhi, whose husband reverted to Islam, "abducted her infant daughter and then had the child [reverted] too, [and] both spouses turned to their respective legal systems", (Whiting, 2010, p. 33). Indira was denied custody of her child by the *Shari'ah* court in 2009 which had ruled out the child custody belong to the father on the basis that their child was Muslim. Both respondents raised concern on the seemingly unjust rule to the mother as more eligible guardian.

The case escalated when Indira appealed in the Ipoh high court and she won a full custody of her three children in 2010[1]. Despite this decision, the action was not taken due to the perceived conflicting jurisdiction between the *Shari'ah* court and the civil court. M007_M, who is a newspaper editor, cited the following example to justify the situation, "Our Inspector-General of Police (IGP) was in a difficult situation to follow which court decision as both ruled out differently". Such a situation was perceived by other respondents as discrimination because the authority appeared not to act out although the decision of the civil court was later than the *Shari'ah* ruling.

Respondents criticised the incapacity of Malaysian legal system particularly the *Shari'ah* law in solving issues like this since it was not the first case (other similar cases include Shamala and Subashini custody battle (Whiting, 2010)). Failure to address such issues contributes to the idea that Islam has not been able to address ethnoreligious disputes since it tends to accentuate ethnic and religious differences (Stark, 2006).

The legal repercussion demonstrates the complexity of managing jurisdictional polarisation between the *Shari'ah* law and Islam and common law (Tamir, 2013; Whiting, 2010). The majority of the non-*bumiputra* (non-*bumiputra* includes non-Malay reverts of Islam, term non-Muslims will be used to exclude non-Malay reverts) was concerned of how Islamic law should reconcile with the civil legal system in the event of a clash of religious interest. This view occurred to Tamir (2013) as he suggested proponents of Islamic law were seen as being anxious in protecting "what they viewed the collective rights of the Muslim community", (p. 785) to the extent of overlooking the interests of the 'other'.

Respondents further revealed how Islam's preferential policies have restricted non-Muslim's freedom of religion. Most troubling of all was the ban of the term Allah from non-Muslims' use that became an international limelight. Non-Muslims and liberal groups were outraged with the court decision on the ban due to the belief that other religious practices have been curtailed. Interdiction of words is not unusual in the Malaysian context. Martinez (2001) noted, "lists of words and expressions which are forbidden for non-Islamic religious use" have been legislated by the state government in Malaysia "on the premise that they are exclusive to Islam" (p.486). Besides the term Allah (god), among other terminologies that were forbidden includes *solat* (liturgical

prayer), *bayt* Allah (House of God), and *Ka'bah* (the holy shrine in Makkah) from being used by other religions (Yousif, 2004).

It is important to note that respondents were not uniform in their understanding of this case. All respondents from government authority agreed with the interdiction, while the other two groups displayed mix responses. Government authority expressed their agreement based on the notion that "Islam is the official religion of the country as stipulated in the constitution" and anything involving Islamic matters must be handled carefully. Some respondents regardless of the group claimed non-Muslims' use of the term as an attempt to challenge Islam and the state's Islamic hegemony. Not least, some even feared that it would cause confusion among Muslim youngsters.

Even though local and international media criticised the ban and proposed it as putting non-Muslims' freedom of religion under the subject of political and Malay's approval; government authority's respondents argued that Malaysia has a right to defend its identity as an Islamic country. They justified their stance in terms of country's identity by comparing with Indonesia where Islam was not in the mainstream (Stark, 2006). G001_F argued:

> People asked, why your neighbour Indonesia allows [using the term, Allah]? All nations have the right to self-determination [of identity]. Don't compare us with another country, we want to have our own identity, because we know our people, we know our country, we know our history. The international community must give us some respect. We want to have our identity.
>
> G001_F – Government authority category

G001_F signified that Malaysia is different from Indonesia. By embedding Islam in the constitution, G001_F believed that Malaysia has greater power to uphold and protect the

religion as compared to Indonesia. Despite the view that other religious values have threatened Islam, it is observed that the only one to be a threat is the elite and political groups as they are afraid of losing power and control over society. Hence, they would come out with religious controversial issues to portray themselves as the saviour of Islam. In fact, most of the Islamic policies upheld have threatened other ethnic groups to obey and accept for fear of being excluded.

Conversely, some participants who opposed the court decision believed had the issue involved non-Muslims or other religions, a different approach would have been taken. Such a notion is confirmed by Tamir (2013) who stated this as "a broader trend of institutional discrimination against non-Muslims in Malaysia" (p. 797); which impinged on their constitutional rights as citizens. P001_M also felt this discrimination:

> Some Muslim groups like Perkasa threat to burn the bible, the government should also deal with them. From the non-Muslims' point of view, the government is not equal. When hate feeling is instigated by Muslims, the government make no issue. But if the hate feeling [comes] from non-Muslims, the government will deal with it quickly.
>
> P001_M – Public respondent

PG001_C confirmed this:

> I mean other races are being stepped over, we are not given our own privilege, or freedom of doing anything or saying anything because the minute we say something, it's like Sedition Act kind of thing.
>
> PG001_C – Public group

It is evident from P001_M's and PG001_C's expressions that the government attempted to contain not only non-Muslim's freedom of religion but also freedom of expression. Dissenting voice of non-Muslims are silenced, chastised, and side-lined on the basis that the government has more authority and capacity to make wise judgements. As Whiting

argued, the arrangement of constitution in Article 3, 10, and 11 respectively – which uphold the "provision that Islam is the religion of the federation and guarantees of equality and freedom of expression and belief […] – have become urgent and divisive matters of political and legal controversy" (Whiting, 2010, p. 2) correctly illustrates P001_M's and PG001_C's views.

In view of these examples, it could be argued discriminative practices are never ending issues in a majority-minority relation. As demonstrated, Islamic ideology and preferential status have heightened the division of 'us' and 'other'. From a progressive view of Islam, the political forces have distorted the Islamisation that is taking place in Malaysia leading towards "intolerance, repressive teachings and practices, and the shrinking of democratic space" while discounting the universal Islamic values such as justice, tolerance, freedom, and equality that were supposed to be upheld (Jason and Gregorios-Pippas, 2010, cited in Weiss, p. 145).

8.5   Cultural Practices

The debates about discrimination also involved cultural aspect. The superiority of Malay culture was noted by almost all research respondents. For example, some teachers or schools have imposed the adoption of Islamic cultures on non-Muslim students. PG001_E recounted her experience as a Chinese girl in a Malay majority national school:

> So the teacher started to notice, they were like, you better wear *Baju Kurung* and you better tie your hair in a certain way, acting in a certain way. You are no longer in KL (Kuala Lumpur), you're in PD (Port Dickson) now. If you want to wear pinafore go to different school.

In this narration, PG001_E revealed that she was treated differently from other school students because of her ethnicity. She illustrated how the dominant culture of the Malay Muslims was preserved when she was asked to downplay her ethnic identity by alternating pinafore to *baju kurung* – a Malay traditional dress – as a school uniform. She was urged to fit in the dominant culture giving her little freedom to retain her Chinese or non-Muslim identity. In this regard, PG001_E inferred that her social interaction, norms, and behaviour should be in line with the ideals of Islam (Saodah and Abu Sadat, 2012). Although this might be an isolated case, I argue this could be detrimental to different cultural practices that should be unique in their own ways.

Another example of a Muslim culture is the act of greeting through the word *assalamu'alaikum* (peace be upon you). In return, it is compulsory for Muslims to reply *wa'alaikumussalam* (and upon you be peace). Sometimes this practice is adopted by non-Muslims in their ordinary interaction with Muslims. PG001_B felt strange when in Malaysia this customary practice is only for Muslims:

> If you go to another country, I think in the Middle East, when they greet you *assalamu'alaikum*, we are supposed to greet them back with *wa'alaikumussalam*. And they get offended when you don't do it. But we in Malaysia have only practiced [*salam*] (greeting) for the Malays. Non-Muslims can't greet with that.
>
> PG001_B – Public group

PG001_B's example demonstrated the fact that some Muslims have little knowledge about their own religion which prevents positive inter-religious understanding and

becomes a source of disputes. A simple issue like this seems to put a barrier between Muslims and non-Muslims when in fact it should be celebrated.

The marginalisation of minority cultures was also related by PG001_B. She mentioned about an issue that was not sufficiently highlighted in media:

> Like at one point, I don't know which year was it, there were many temples were destroyed. It was monuments; it was hundred years' temples [which] can be historical sites you know. But because it was Hindu temples, they broke them down. The issue was just silenced.
>
> PG001_B – Public group

Welsh (2013) confirmed PG001_B's claim who reported the destruction of Hindu temples and denial of non-Muslims' space which have increased the sentiments against the government. In PG001_B's example, non-Muslims' historical sites were not being preserved although they could offer a historical identity, symbolising the practice of Hinduism in Malaysia. This statement signalled the insignificance of cultures of the 'other'. There is no doubt as the number of Indian is insignificant compared to Malay and Chinese, the 'othering' of the ethnic group has been blatant. Haque (2003) observed, in furthering Malay cultures, the government has strongly involved in imposing a restriction on other cultural and religious practices and symbols. The present policies which allocate certain ratios for Muslim's and non-Muslim's house of worship could clarify the demolishment of the religious monuments as claimed by PG001_B. Martinez (2001) stated it is expected one church should accommodate up to 4,000 Christians in comparison to Muslim's mosque which accommodates only 800 people. The significant disparity in ration distribution between Islam and other religions further reinforced the claim of discrimination between ethnicities.

M001_M vented his frustration by asserting "national culture hardly takes into account the culture of the non-*bumiputra*". He commented, only Malay cultures and cuisines have been usually showcased in local or national government functions although Chinese and Indian represent the other dominant ethnic groups too. M001_M observed the lack of cultural diversity and richness and the common focus on Islam when it comes to representation. M001_M's resentment was understandable because food could be cultural, traditional, and ceremonial (Shuhirdy, Nurul Aisyah, Nik Mohd, Hamizad, Mohd Salehuddin, 2013). Besides marking borders, social distinction, and contradiction (Bar-on, 2000, cited in Shuhirdy et al., 2013) between ethnic groups, food further accentuates identity (Conner and Armitage, 2002, cited in Shuhirdy et al., 2013). In the example shared by M001_M, the government seems to purposely undermine other cultures. This appears to be in conflict with the National Culture Policy of 1971 which states national culture should be an amalgamation of diverse ethnic practices in Malaysia (Salleh, 2005).

8.6   Contesting through Civil Society

According to Gramsci, although hegemony is gained through consent from the masses, it is incorrect to assume that people are easily controlled and manipulated. Gramsci viewed people could become critical thinkers and use a public sphere or civil society as a ground for political contestation and struggles over dominant ideas and norms. Gramsci's notion of civil society also applies to the current Malaysian's political struggle. Through the civil society, the public finds a way to openly challenge the state's power. Mass rallies against ruling authorities could be dated back in 1946 of the union

303

protests against British's rule (Smeltzer and Pare, 2015). One of the most renowned protest movements is *Bersih* (the coalition for clean and fair election) movement. *Bersih* is a consolidation of 84 non-governmental organisations which mainly uses the Internet to disseminate information and mobilise support from the masses (Radue, 2012).

Bersih has drawn its supporters from different social classes and groups to challenge the political hegemony. P008_F personally believed that "they [*Bersih*] are doing it for a good cause and the least we could do to express our disagreement and discontent is voicing it out, probably by doing a rally". As proposed by P008_F and P009_F, *Bersih* is speaking on behalf of Malaysians who want a clear and transparent leadership in Malaysia, particularly with regards to elections. One of the demands of *Bersih* according to P009_F is the insistence of using indelible ink on avoid voter fraud. It could be implied, the demands made in *Bersih* movement has contributed to exposing many irregularities in government's activities. *Bersih* represents the need to achieve group solidarity in realising clean and fair elections.

One respondent was, however, concerned with the national security due to *Bersih* movement. P009_F argued, "Our security is at risk because *Bersih*'s participants have acted violently against public property. They also attacked the police and the media. Traders, where the rally was conducted, also suffered heavy losses." As a result, *Bersih* has been labelled illegal by the government for disrupting public order. In this assertion, *Bersih*'s contestations have been contained by the state for its perceived threat to the state hegemony. Without prompted, she added *Bersih* would not be successful to reform the government because the majority of the people are not utterly united. "People are more concerned to mind their own business rather than engaging in a political rally,

that's why not all people turned up for the rally as in Pakistan" (P009_F). Hence, this does not ensure total political participation which prevents political reformation as advocated by *Bersih*.

This claim was also articulated by M002_F. When prompted to describe *Bersih*, she only looked at it as an irrational movement that expresses discontents through illegal demonstrations and rallies. For M002_F, *Bersih* also has its own agenda to topple down the government not merely for a fair and clean election. This could be contributed to the fact that the media has depicted *Bersih* as a movement which is led by the minority NGOs (Holler, 2015) as noted by M002_F and P009_F. I reckon some people are not convinced for a political transition mainly because Malaysia has been led by one-party system Barisan Nasional (BN) for almost 50 years where greater focused have been on the Malay's rights. Thus, they could not foresee how their future would be under the governance of the mostly non-*bumiputra* parties. Despite this view, *Bersih* has increased the political awareness among the masses and sparked active involvements from the middle age groups of urban population to shape Malaysia's political culture. Malaysian society could now hope to see changes in the Malaysian politics.

Another NGO that was highlighted by my respondents to have posed contestation is Sisters in Islam (SIS). SIS "has played a leading role in pushing the boundaries of women's rights within Islam and within the framework of a country that is fast modernising and relatively democratic", (Zainah, 2001, p. 227). According to P001_M, SIS is led by a group of Malay-Muslim women professionals with a high social status. Each of these women has their "own circle of influence in the legal, journalistic, and academic fields", (Saliha, 2003, p. 108). P001_M noted:

> If you find the leaders of SIS, they don't cover their hair. They think Muslim women should exercise their free will of how to dress. They believe hair is not offensive, so why there is a need to cover hair.
>
> P001_M – Public category

A close reading of P001_M's quotation inferred women are discriminated and unequally treated in the judicial system and practice. The leaders of SIS promoted that the government should not interfere in the matters of the appearance of Muslim women particularly in respond to government's implementation of rules that ordered all civil servants to cover their head during office hours. This was viewed by SIS as a harsh regulation since the government's Islamisation of appearance has curtailed the freedom of individual expressions among Muslim women. Hence, SIS finds the need to step forward and shift the perception of how to regard and treat women.

In this discussion, the politicisation of culture and religion has been used to justify discrimination against women. SIS's contestation has demonstrated how women's rights have been jeopardised in the name of Islamic law. It is suggested, SIS against "the patriarchal interpretation of Islam that caused injustices" not Islam.[2] What has been pointed out by SIS is right because religion should only be practiced out of one's own will instead of being institutionally imposed.

SIS also aims to uphold the rights of women from the issue of equality between men and women in polygamous marriages. Creating awareness of women's rights is one of its undertakings which are usually done through media. P007_F beheld, SIS is a platform to detach Muslim women from Islamic conservatism. Since SIS is more oriented towards secular feminism and uses blatant approach against some Islamic laws, it has been labelled as trying to distort Muslims' faith (P009_F). According to P009_F,

"the basis of SIS's contestation in the matters of polygamy is related to Islamic jurisdiction." This has given negative views on SIS because Islamic matters have always been sensitive in Malaysia. Rather, for P009_F, SIS should contest "on the basis that Malaysian men cannot afford to be fair financially for polygamous marriages". P007_F further stated SIS's contestation in upholding the rights and roles of women in Malaysia are timely except that when it exhibits resistance to Islamic law. For SIS, women's rights have been under the attack of law especially in polygamous marriages where their fundamental human rights have been stripped.[3]

Regardless of SIS's controversial statement and challenges to the hegemonic Islamic ideology, it has not been threatened as much as *Bersih* movement. Saliha (2003) argued this is due to SIS's exclusivity and intellectuality which enhance "Malaysia's international image as a progressive, modernist, and moderate Muslim country" (p. 109) which has reduced the perceived threat of SIS. While respondents believed this was due to the affiliation of SIS's leadership with the people in the ruling party of BN. However, SIS movement has posed contests against other Islamic NGOs in the country which postulates civil society could also contest against one another owing to their distinct interests.

8.7   Conclusions

This chapter has explored the dissenting views of the public as a result of the construction of Islam-Malay's preferential status in the political and societal structures. It also highlights underlying fears and growing feeling of alienation among non-Muslims and non-*bumiputra* pertaining to their rights when Islam becomes the state

ideology. The contested views are not unfounded by looking at Sriskandarajah (2005, p. 64) who asserted that there exist "real and perceived disparities in access to a range of economic, political, and social resources between groups within a society". The disparities in accessing these recourses have been reported hindering the integration between different ethnic groups.

In the contestation, it could be observed that non-*bumiputra* is in dilemma to locate themselves in the broader societal and political settings. The government could be argued as implementing a top-down project where Islamic policies and Malay's special position have been constructed to secure a hegemonic position in the polity. Through these constructions, the data have illustrated government's attempt to inflict Malay power and political control particularly in the domains of politics and ethnic arrangement, economics and business, education and language, religious issues and cultural practices. This contradicts Saodah's and Abu Sadat's (2012) position that Islam is used solely to strengthen Muslim's faith.

The chapter has also discovered forms of racialisation and ethnicisation. Throughout the chapter, the divisive frames of the 'otherness' appear to be a common process of ethnicisation used by the elite power. The minority ethnic groups have been represented in major political discourses as a threat to the majority group and national security. This finding is supported by the warning made by Zembylas (2010) that "the constructed and discursive nature of race and ethnicity is recognised as a political project for the formation of particular individuals and social groups", (Zembylas, 2010, pp. 254). In short, ethnicisation and racialisation refer to the construction of social borders (Woodward, 2004) or the marking of difference in the ethnic minorities (Hall,

1997) which could exacerbate a majority-minority relation. The question remains whether Malaysia is the Malay nation, a Malaysian nation or only a collection of nations of Malay, Chinese, and Indian.

It is imperative to suggest both the majority and the minority ethnic groups have contributed to the deepening of the difference between 'us' and 'other'. As the 'us' has shown its disinclination to recognise the 'other' through its Malay-centric policies, the contestation of the 'other' also works similarly. The lack of mutual cooperation from both sides would never be able to reconcile the ethnic groups. Although some respondents conveyed their acceptance on the discriminative practices, close reading from the data discloses otherwise. Haque (2003) contended non-Malay's uncooperative attitude has obstructed Malaysia's nation-building process. Among the examples proposed by the respondents include non-Malays' rejection of going to the same school with the majority group, the reluctance of learning the majority culture and Malay language, and claiming *Adzan* calling (the call of prayer for Muslim) as a disturbance. Everything has been looked at suspiciously and racist which every small problem involving different ethnicities would escalate into tension.

Meanwhile, it appears the majority group has been hesitant in appreciating cultural differences due to the strong articulation of Islamic ideology and Malay status. This becomes obstacles to ethnic integration. Rudiger and Spencer (2003) explained integration failures occur when the minority groups are "included as citizens, participate in social and cultural interaction, but lack access to education and employment opportunities" as well as integration "in the labour market but excluded from participation in civil society and political processes", (p. 6). Integration would not take

place when the focus is merely on an adaptation by minority groups with the aim of retaining "an existing social order with its hegemonic practices and values" (Rudiger et al., 2003, p. 5). Rather integration requires "steps that may be necessary to facilitate the inclusion and participation of newcomers" (Rudiger et al., 2003, p. 5). In view of these definitions and the discussions, Malaysia could be experiencing integration failure.

As shared by some respondents, integration of ethnic groups has been challenging due to discriminative practices. Brighton (2007, p. 5) defined integration "not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance"; which are lacking in Malaysia. Brighton (2007) together with Yousif (2004) and Embong (2002) argued forced assimilation or 'melting pot' is not a correct strategy to be implemented in a multi-cultural society. Phillips (2005) added that "we've focused far too much on the 'multi' and not enough on common culture", (p.8). Too much focus on differences has led to the short-sightedness in seeing commonalities as an opportunity. This view was also shared by M004_F who urged Malaysians to celebrate differences and working on common values. Yet, it could be established from the data at hand it is the 'difference' that has always been accentuated in political and everyday discourses as well as in the implementation of policies. Phillips (2005) further emphasised on equality as "an absolute precondition for integration" which, based on the contestations, is not fully put into practice in Malaysia.

In corresponding to Barr and Govindasamy (2006; 2010); the majority of the research participants argued some policies implemented has forced ethnic minorities to accept a secondary position. However, they still being able to preserve certain levels of

autonomy to resist. As demonstrated in the section before the conclusions, some of them have participated in the increasingly popular networks of civil society (Stark, 2007). Civil society groups have become a platform to actively address ethnic and religious discriminations. Lee (2004) suggested civil society is concerned with wide-ranging issues such as gender, religious, and ethnic discriminations in Southeast Asia. Civil society has transformed Malaysia's political scenario by inspiring many citizens to take part in public discourse and participation (Lee, 2004) through an organised way.

It is learned from Chapter 6 that the Islamic civil society groups such as ABIM and Perkasa do not really work to contest against state's dominant ideology. They pose a rather different threat to the state's hegemonic structures by pressurising the government to implement the dominant ideology seriously. In response, the state has been steadfast in sponsoring religious activities in the country (Yousif, 2004) and has been able to keep religious dissenters in check (Ramasamy, 2004). Instead of limiting state's power over society as in line with Gramsci, this type of civil society could be claimed as reinforcing state's hegemony and power through the perceived mandate given.

In this chapter, civil society is portrayed as a platform to challenge the state ideology. Civil society groups organise themselves to enhance the welfare of the society by impeding the state from having too much power over society (Ramasamy, 2004) based on the notion offered by Gramsci. As respondents shared, *Bersih* is the present-day movement that challenges the state openly by mobilising a large number of public and NGOs in the forms of a rally. *Bersih* could be argued as fulfilling Gramsci's idea of "war of position" through reforms and gathering strength or "developing the links between oppositional groups and forging" their oppositions "into a coherent 'counter-

hegemonic' politics", (Miles and Croucher, 2013, p. 416). It is important to suggest *Bersih* provides means for the public political engagement which was restricted before. As Welsh (2013) agued, *Bersih* has contributed to the expansion of civil society by normalising the uncovering of corrupted practices and by "including more open criticism of political leaders as well as much-needed attention […] issues", (p. 138).

Although *Bersih* movement has successfully garnered people from different backgrounds to manifest their resistance towards state's hegemony, it has not yet been able to realise that resistance into achievable political plans. While the public is no longer submissive to the state's perceived authoritarian control, their resistance has not been able to reform the government. What civil society could offer in future is still questionable because the state has always used means such as legislations to crack down any contesting activities from inserting too much influence and challenges.

In relation to Gramsci's hegemony-dominance discussion, it is essential to reflect on the statement made by Barr and Govindasamy (2010) to illustrate the current Malaysia's situation. They stated Islam is used in "a programme of hegemony designed to reinforce Malay occupation at the heart of Malaysia's nation-building project and to condition non-Malays and non-Muslims to accept their assimilation into the Malaysian nation as subordinate, peripheral partners", (pp. 294-295). In this example, the state uses Islam to ensure consent and domination; consent among the Muslim population, while domination on some segments of the non-Muslim community. The state is exercising coercive force ideologically on non-Muslims that put them in a subordinate position. This has been demonstrated in respondents' narrations such as state's refusal in

incorporating diversity into its dominant culture and ideology which is more accurate to represent the multi-cultural nature of the society's population. Hegemony in Malaysia has, consequently, involved the coercive exercise of power.

However, the hegemonic ideology will continue to be challenged as contestations have been taken up to various different forms from time to time. For instance, it is important to acknowledge that social media has been appropriated by the general public to voice out their once suppressed opinions. Though their opinion may not be able to bring about a change in the institution, to some extent this effort has been successful in garnering protest against the hegemonic power. In support of this discussion, Valenzuela (2013) summarised from an existing research that "social media can influence collective action" by "mobilising information and news not available in other media, facilitating the coordination of demonstrations, allowing users to join political causes, and creating opportunities to exchange opinions with other people", (p. 921). Therefore, it is pertinent to conclude that the social media has played a tremendous role in getting the public opinion at the front line.

Reflecting on the empirical chapters of this thesis, one important observations made is Islam plays a major role in Malaysia. Islamic ideology has been promoted at a national stage and has influenced in policy making. It dictates people's life, it influences societal context and to some extent, it becomes a subject of government's fear when it is exercised through civil society's agenda. Although ethnicity remains a key subject to influence political decisions, the embedment of Islam further reinforces Malay-oriented policies since it has a strong basis in the constitution. As shown in this chapter, Islam

313

has been associated with the deepening of the difference between 'us' and 'other'. Islamic ideology is, thus, used for strengthening the Malay political domination and legacy. This could negate the claim made by Barr and Govindasamy (2010), Ufen (2009), and Miller (2004) that Islam holds a subservient position.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

9.0   Introduction

This thesis mainly contributes to the understanding of how Islam interacts and intersects with politics, society, and cultures in explaining the dominant cultures of Malaysia. Here, the study explains the markers and symbols of Islamic practices which indirectly emphasised on the heterogeneity of Islamic cultures that are historically, politically, and culturally specific to a Malaysian context.

The thesis has demonstrated that the religion of Islam is pervasive and powerful in the construction of the state ideology in order to establish hegemony. As shown, the state has mobilised many important institutions to construct and preserve Islamic values and norms as a dominant ideology (Chapter 6); which coincides with, and influences, the public practice of Islam and offer a unique religious identity to Malaysian society (Chapter 7). But there exists local contestation posed by subaltern groups on the supremacy of Islam and the superior position of Malay Muslims (Chapter 8).

It is vital to note the focused literature review on hegemony helps to understand the discussion from one chapter to another and to explain the emerging empirical data in general. Hegemony, as used towards the end of the development of categories in data analysis, helps to comprehend how categories are connected to form a bigger theoretical understanding. The concept has been referred to once the core categories have been established.

This study has been approached using a qualitative research method. This

method has been selected considering the ability of its nature to precisely achieve the research objectives and to address the research questions. As this study has been conducted within a specific time period some limitations and problems are unavoidable. Instead of using grounded theory in its complete sense, this research has adopted abbreviated grounded theory to data analysis. These have all been addressed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Important attention has been given to ethical issues since it helps to achieve the aim of the investigation while still reporting truth and minimising error. In data collection, interviews are conducted based on ethical considerations. All interviews are tape-recorded with expressed permission from the research participants. Research skills have been vital in ensuring meaningful data are collected to address the main research objective. All these have been noted in detailed in Chapter 4.

This research has employed NVivo software to assist in the organisation and analysis of data comprehensively. Briefly, the use of NVivo software could encourage other future researchers to embark on studies with the assistance of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). This is because very few qualitative research especially grounded theory research has attempted to use CADQAS. It is timely to switch from traditional method to a more systematic and rigorous preparation and analysis of qualitative data; since it could reduce the complexity of data examination. In Chapter 5, this study has offered steps in analysing data which could become a reference on the possible ways of using NVivo.

In this study, interview transcripts are analysed inductively with the aims to

allow categories, themes, and codes to emerge without force. The use of NVivo has greatly eased the analysis process using grounded theory coding system, Charmaz's (2006) perspective as well as constructivist-interpretivist research paradigm. Without adequate knowledge on these, significant data might not be derived. As mentioned previously, I have approached this study using grounded theory method through the constructivist-interpretivist perspective. This means, the result of the study is co-constructed by the researcher's experience, ideas and the participants' data (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1997). The analysis of the data has resulted in the markers of the embedment of Islamic cultures.

Through these markers and symbols, the main objective of this research is achieved. This study has been carried out with an attempt to answer the general question 'To what extent Islamic cultures have been embedded in the political and societal fabrics of Malaysia?'. Among the underlying questions guiding the research:

(i)   How are Islamic cultures constructed and manufactured in Malaysian politics?
(ii)   How is Islam practiced in the Malaysian society?
(iii)   How has Islam influenced the culture of the Malaysian society?
(iv)   What are the challenges in the preferential construction and maintenance of Islam and its cultures in Malaysia?

Congruence with the grounded theory principles, the adoption of delayed literature review has widened the manner I approach this study. My thesis has extended the academic scholarship of Malaysia's state Islamisation project and Islamic revivalism, but my emphasis is on their cultural implications on the societal and political practices including the challenges confronted; by analysing real experiences of people, who involve with the project, live in the society, and adhere to Islamic values and

317

principles. Islamisation, as used in this research, refers to the pursuit of politics on the basis of Islamic ideals, values, and norms by considering the local history and culture. I contend that the Malaysia's Islamisation is a politically improved strategy from ethnic-focused to religious emphasis to harmonise with the dominant culture or the Malay cultures in order to maintain state hegemony. Since the coming of Islam to Malaya, Islam, and the state have been in a cordial relationship. The fate of Islam changed drastically under the tutelage of Mahathir Mohamad as the Prime Minister. Islam has since assumed active agencies in the governance of Malaysia and has been revived within society.

The focused literature has helped in understanding the data more meaningfully. It has been argued that the state utilises ideological power and mobilises various cultural institutions to establish hegemony. Besides active ethnic accommodation, Islamic ideology has become another dominant ideology to ensure state's continuity of hegemonic power. Towards the end of this examination, I have explored the dynamic relations between ideological power, culture, and institutional practice of the state in constructing and transmitting Islamic ideals within society with the aim to understand how the emerging core categories are interrelated (Chapter 3).

Generally, the first half of the concluding chapter will reflect on the major findings of this thesis as previously summarised in Figure 4 in Chapter 5. Subsequent to that, evaluation of the study will be demonstrated and contributions of the research to knowledge will be drawn. Lastly, the chapter will discuss some suggestions for future research that could be built from this study followed by a concluding remark.

9.1   The Overarching Categories

The focus of this section is to summarise and evaluate each empirical chapter. As illustrated in Figure 4, the framework for understanding the embedment of Islamic cultures unearths the ways and extent to which Islamic cultures have been embedded in the societal and political realms of Malaysia.

This thesis has captured the stories from the empirical data into a comprehensible representation using a framework in Figure 4. It is noted by Charmaz (2006), instead of aiming to construct a definitive picture; the grounded theory method could be used to offer an interpretive portrayal of an issue being researched. On this notion, the framework developed in this thesis provides explanatory frames from which realities could be viewed (Alasuutari, 1996).

The framework explains how Islam interacts with politics, society, and cultures. Before coming to the core theme, I started data analysis with initial coding. Using a constant comparative approach, I move from descriptive to a more conceptual coding. I reviewed, arranged, sorted, sketched, removed, and reflected on patterns before eventually identified seven conceptual codes. The conceptual codes were then subsumed under three overarching categories after connections and links between conceptual codes have been explored and interrogated. The overarching categories 'political system, 'everyday conducts', and 'challenges to Islam's preferential position' are all connected to the core issue. The contesting features category is placed outside of the core issue to signify it as a consequence of the Islam's preferential position. It could at the same time influence the direction in the political aspect and the everyday conducts

319

of the society. The first set of the category, that is the political system, is rather descriptive in nature and is contextually significant. The descriptive codes were raised into a category due to its ability and significance in representing the studied phenomenon.

It is vital to acknowledge that in understanding the themes presented in the framework, I reviewed literature which discusses the complex relationships between power, ideology, state, and culture. The readings have directed to the concept of hegemony which has facilitated in exploring how the emerging categories in the framework relate to one another. As has been proposed, the use of literature in grounded theory is encouraged when core categories are well underway. Literature could be sought into the study to confirm or refute emerging ideas. Literature used at this stage is different from the one in the initial review. In this reading, hegemony has been useful to explain the relationships between the power of the state in constructing and maintaining the Islamic ideology within the society. "The strength of a Gramscian conceptual framework lies in its emphasis on the complex operation of hegemony and the critical role that popular consent plays within any successful hegemonic project", (O'Shannassy, 2008). On this notion, the ruling class should shift its ideological approach if the wish is to maintain its hegemony. Hence, Islamic ideology may not be the only ideology employed to ensure state's legitimacy.

There is an important observation that could be drawn from the debate presented in the empirical chapters (Chapter 6-8). Islam has been promoted at a national stage and has greatly affected policy making. Although ethnicity remains a key subject to influence political decisions, the embedment of Islam in politics has strengthened

Malay-oriented policies. In this view, Islam adds authorisation to ethnic Malay to deepen and strengthen Malay political legacy and Malay political domination. This justifies Islam is not a mere peripheral partner to the ethnic Malay as argued by some scholars. Rather this research affirms the view that Islam provides a strong basis for the ethnic Malay to ensure its distinctiveness from other races. Ideologically, Islam is equally important as the ethnic Malay. The following sections will explicate the framework in Figure 4 to expand this discussion.

9.1.1   The Political System

The objective of Chapter 6 is to explore the process by which Islamic values, norms, and principles are constructed, preserved, defended, and renewed in Malaysian politics. In this struggle, the state plays a role in mobilising key organisations to become its cultural producers that would promote Islamic ideology and shape the understanding and practice of Islam at the political level. The chapter has unearthed the aspects of Islamic cultures under a concept 'political system'.

The chapter has uncovered many aspects that reflect the state Islamic ideology. It has been brought to attention that the ideology of the state concurs with the dominant cultures of the inland people. This has provided the state with a hegemonic power to pursue its political agenda which has been translated into major Islamisation effort or Islamic revivalism.

As reported, Islam has been embraced as the state ideology to complement the ethnic nationalism because of its ability to strengthen the nation-building project. As

nationalism requires prevailing symbols around which population could be mobilised and united, it centres on Malayness. Nationalism signifies the inception of Muslim politics and influence which has been manifested in the Islamisation of the country during Mahathir era. Partly manifested in Islamic revivalism, it aims to push for a greater role of Islam where the government has embarked proactively on major Islamisation projects in the area of legal, education, economy, and politics.

It has been reported that Islam becomes a prevailing element in the state's affairs and politics. For example, Islam has been embedded in the constitution, Malay identity, and political power. The preferential position of Islam and Malay is clearly stated in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. This serves as a strong basis for the government to implement many Islamic-emphasis agenda which is vital for the continuation of Malay political leadership. It is important to highlight the assignment of Islam in Malay identity has greatly intensified the power of Malay political actors. The imposition of Islamic ideology in Malay identity is a strategic attempt made by the government to influence consent from the majority of the Malay Muslim population. Without one of them, Islam or Malay would not have been a strong element for power mobilisation.

There are several organisations that are keys to state's institutionalisation of Islam. Jakim for example is an important government institution that coordinates all Islamic activities. Regulating *halal-haram* matters appear to be one of the Jakim's permanent roles. Another prominent government think-tank is IKIM whose task is to provide progressive Islamic worldviews through education. Although it has been claimed that IKIM is free from the government's influence, it has greatly assisted the government to propagate the Islamic ideology.

There are also several bodies that do not directly serve the government purpose but considered important to push Islamic agenda in the political arena. For instance, the opposition party of PAS has forced the state to divert its secularist development enterprise to be within the scope of Islam. PAS has become a body that performs a check-and-balance function to the government. Civil society groups such as Perkasa and ABIM also perform a similar function. It has been learned from this research that little has been done by Perkasa and ABIM to contest the government Malay-Islam's rhetoric. Instead, the NGOs have worked to push the one-sided political ideology even further in the government discourses.

Even though it has proposed that civil society is a ground for state's political struggle, it can be seen how the nature of the political contestation posed by these non-state forces is skewed to the advantage of the government. As Ramasamy (2004) aptly summed up, "they fall short of seriously challenging the ideological basis of the state", (p.214). In fact, both the definitive position of Islam and the movement of civil society have contributed to situate other races in marginal, peripheral position.

Overall, this chapter has added to the view that Islam does not simply serve as a tool for political mileage. From Gramsci's theoretical explanation, it is perceived as if the state's promotion of Islamic values and ideas that congruent with the needs of the people merely to establish consent. However, the government's steadfast determination to institutionalise Islam as a way of life have not only created encouraging Islamic atmosphere but also showed its commitment to see the public lead a noble way of life. This view should not be underestimated.

9.1.2 The everyday conducts

With the aim to broaden an understanding of the extent to which religion has been interweaved in Malaysian society, Chapter 7 has explored the ways in which Islam becomes part of cultures and lifeways of Muslims in Malaysia. As shown in Chapter 6, the government supports the comprehension and practice of Islam by providing important infrastructures and giving priority to Muslims to encourage religious observation among them. As Muslims' conducts have been under the supervision and support of the government, I have argued that Islam has been widely and publicly practiced and observed.

It has been explored Islamic cultures are manifested as everyday practices of the Malaysian public. Under a concept 'everyday conducts', this study has examined two important levels of Islamic cultures; communal level and individual level. At the collective level, major Islamic symbols are highlighted to exemplify how Islamic values and norms have influenced the Malaysian society. This includes Islamic *da'wah*, Islamic education, Islamic wealth management, and other common societal practices. For example, this research has derived *da'wah* serves to reinforce inter-religious relations in the creation of *ummah*. It concerns more with rectifying non-Muslim's perceptions on Islam since Malaysia is a multi-religious society. Related to *da'wah* is Islamic education since it is highly influential to spread the knowledge of Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims.

Another example to explain the 'communal everyday conducts' could be illustrated in the salient Islamic atmosphere such as the selection of Friday as an off day

in some states; Kelantan, Johor, and Terengganu. This is to encourage male Muslims to attend and perform their obligatory Friday sermon and prayer in mosques. In these states, most shops are closed and many other activities will be put on hold to respect the prayer time.

The media similarly has been influenced by the Islamic cultures. There has been an increase in religiously driven contents which indirectly reduced non-Islamic contents. It has been argued this has affected the non-Muslims' rights to freedom of information which has never been good for the public. One would argue that this would be due to the conservative stance endorsed by the government that denotes the unwillingness to open up to other ethnic and religious values. It is vital to stress out that the public would not be socially duped just because of the control since they could still find other sources of information.

At the individual level, the data has discovered that the government has, to some extent, succeeded in promoting greater Islamic roles within society. But, support and supervision from the government are not the main forces in realising Islamic ideals. However important the state's emphasis on Islam; it is the faith or belief system that acts as a foundation of religions. When Muslims do not observe religious obligations, the government is not responsible for it since religious manifestation is largely influenced by faith. It has been reported that strong belief usually entails voluntary practices of Islamic obligations. In this sense, the government has provided support and it is the people who have to decide which paths to follow. Still, it should not be denied that the awareness and spread of Islam in Malaysia are also due to the supportive environment.

Faith usually involves roles and roles-expectations such as the performance of religious rituals and obligations. It has been shown, most respondents described themselves as an observant Muslims. Although few were not being explicit about this, they illustrated their understanding of religious obligations as Muslims and even among non-Muslims. On this premise, Islamic ideals and values are prevailing in the life of Muslims. This, therefore, justifies why Islam has been adopted as the state ideology in the construction of hegemony.

In examining religious obligations, several Islamic obligations such as prayers, covering *aurah*, and the observance of *halal* and *haram* have been discussed as the most obvious Islamic practices. For example, the act of covering *aurah* or veiling such as wearing *hijab* (head scarf) and *jubah* (robe) symbolises Muslim's religious commitment and self-discipline. Some people considered wearing *jubah* is the kind of Islamic attire because it has been a tradition of the Arab people. Since the Arab culture is strong, most Muslims in Malaysia has adopted this tradition. While Islamic attire may be considered as a symbol of religiousness in some part of the world, such as in a non-majority Muslim country, this does not similarly applies in Malaysia. This, however, might be a sign of commitment to Islam.

Moral principles are also an individual matter. Moral principles could be defined as a good moral behaviour or *akhlaq*. In Islamic viewpoint, good moral values would lead to Islamic expressions and practices. For instance, respect falls under the continuum of Islamic moral values. In a multi-racial society, respect is vital in maintaing inter-racial understanding. However, it has been read from the data that some Muslims do not really put an emphasis on these values because they are invisible, unlike religious

performance. Hence, the practice of moral values might not be dominant as compared to observable religious rituals.

From these discussions, respondents' narratives have challenged the view that religion as a private matter – the idea that religious practices as invasive to individual's public life (Fadil, 2013) – because they are performed publicly and almost instantaneously where necessary. Religion as a private matter has no relevance in this context because the dominant ideology provides assurance that religious practices – particularly Islam, not other religions – will be respected. But religion is a private matter when describing a connection between a Muslim and Allah.

The chapter has also explored that majority of the respondents displayed a rigid interpretation of Islamic practices. This indicates they strongly hold to Islamic viewpoints as the basis of their religion which might have been a clue for the government to maintain its ideological hegemony. In view of Gramsci's notion, besides capitalises religion to create its political ideology, the elite group fulfils the interest of the ruled to establish hegemony.

The chapter concludes Islamic cultures have been dominant and marked significantly in the communal surroundings and individual rituals. The apparent signs of Islam have become more striking in the Malaysian socio-cultural life. Religious rituals are the hallmark of Islamic cultures and many Muslim participants insist on the importance of rituals that act as the manifestation of faith; which is further reflected in the public cultures of Muslims.

9.1.3 The Contestations towards Malay-Islam's Preferential Position

The final empirical chapter, Chapter 8, is concerned with the challenges confronted in the implementation and maintenance of the preferential position of Islam and its cultures in Malaysia. The chapter has contended that contesting viewpoints demonstrate hegemony of the state may be challenged including through civil society. Researching views from different ethnic groups such as minority groups have uncovered the voice from below.

There are several broad areas around which state's ideological position has been contested by the public which has posed a threat to the definitive position of Islam and Malay. The public contestations have been explored in these six domains; politics and ethnic arrangement, education and language, economics and business, religious issues, cultural practices, and contesting through civil society. This chapter basically addresses respondents' observations on subaltern voices and their repressed views that oppose the public transcript as illustrated in Chapter 6. The discussion on Malay-Islam's definitive position has further deepened our understanding on how the ethnic minority is marginalised to a peripheral status. In other words, state's partial attention on the interest of one ethnic group has neglected other ethnic groups and intensified the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. This has put the ethnic minority in the 'other' position.

It has been learned that the public has signalled an important point of contestation to the government's dominant ideology although they might not be mobilised using civil society groups. Still, the unrelenting grievances and injustices from below have been discovered which signifies consent is not uninterrupted by the

public. I perceive this has deepened the deeply divided society of Malaysia. For instance, minority groups have been avoiding from complete integration with the majority culture and vice versa. Everything is now being looked at suspiciously and racist and every small problem involving different ethnicities would escalate into tension.

The discussion on the final section further acknowledges the Gramscian notion that the public could become critical over state's dominant norms and make use of the public sphere or civil society as a ground for contestation and struggles. This conception also applies to the current Malaysian's political struggle. Through the civil society, the public finds a way to openly challenge the state's power. It is likely that Malaysia's civil society is no longer "primordial and gelatinous" like in the backward capitalist civilisation (Gramsci, 1971, p. 243). Instead, civil society in Malaysia has transformed into a much stronger structure, which provides the opposition forces opportunities to benefit from and accomplish the potential of their counter-hegemonic project. The chapter, however, concludes that what civil society could offer is still questionable because the state has always utilised legislative means to crack down any contesting activities from becoming influential and too challenging.

9.2   Evaluation of the Study

As previously mentioned, my decision on measuring the quality of this study has been informed by Elliott et al. (1999), Charmaz (2006), and Morrow (2005). I assembled recommendations made by these authors after recognising areas of common interest across their sources under the headings researcher's role within the research credibility,

clarity, and originality. Table 5 summarised the guidance and measures of evaluation adopted in this research.

Quality Criteria	Components of Evaluating this Study
Researcher's role within the research	• Offer reflexive statements throughout this thesis where necessary. • Use a bracketing strategy during data analysis as suggested by Charmaz (2006) in order to allow the data to speak for themselves and to see the phenomenon under investigation afresh. Memos are used to assist the implementation of this strategy. • Locate my voice as the researcher within the current thesis using the first person such as when reporting the data analysis as well as when explicating about the decisions made throughout this research (Mills et al., 2006b).
Credibility	• The description of the research sample could be found in Chapter 5 under the 'participant selection' section which has explored the criteria that led to their inclusion in this research. • Tables containing the list of basic demographic information of the research sample are offered in Table 1-4 of Chapter 5. • The process of coding and analytic procedures are comprehensively discussed under the 'data analysis' section of Chapter 5. Excerpts of a transcript, a memo, and coding from NVivo and attempts towards category's development are presented as appendices which serve as an audit trail. • Steps and progress of data analysis were shared with a supervisory team from time to time. • The discussions of the analytical ideas and findings have been supported by respondents' extracts to demonstrate the rational links between data and argument. The data

	has been interpreted through the philosophical lens underpinning this study (elaborated in Chapter 4).
	• The issues of obtaining truthful information have been discussed thoroughly in 'interviewing', 'ethical considerations' and 'data collection procedure' sections of Chapter 5.
	• Acknowledge the limitations of the research in Chapter 1.
Clarity	• To explain my interpretation of the data clearly, a framework for understanding the main research question was developed to illustrate the core connecting categories.
	• Using a comparative analysis approach as suggested by Boeije (2002), I emphasised on respondents' data which could provide multiple opinions whereby disconfirming evidence or negative cases could be explored. Evidence found in data have been explored and interpreted in the empirical chapters (Chapter 6-8).
	• Besides face-to-face interviewing, focus group was employed to ensure the breadth and depth of information. Shenton (2004) recognised approaching diverse informants is a kind of triangulation via data sources.
Originality and usefulness	• The original contribution of this study has been explored in Chapter 6-8 and specifically summarised in Chapter 9. Suggestion on future research has also been made.
	• The originality also lies in the empirical data collected.
	• The usefulness of the findings in the social practice of shaping perception on Malaysia has been discussed in chapter 9.

Table 5 The principles adopted to evaluate grounded theory research

9.3   Contributions of Research to the Body of Knowledge

The results of this research will contribute to the body of knowledge in diverse important ways. First, instead of providing general knowledge, cultural studies' perspective and constructionist approach help to particularise understanding of the social phenomenon being researched. This would implicate the research findings to the local situation since research in cultural studies "is understood to reveal a local and historically specific cultural or "bounded" system", (Stake, 1995, cited in Alasuutari, 1996, 372). This meant, expressed meanings are historically and culturally specific. This research, therefore, contributes to interpret Islamic cultures as historically and culturally specific to Malaysian context as illustrated in the framework developed in the Figure 4.

As a theory is defined by Alasuutari (1996) as an interpretive frame by which realities could be viewed, this research offers a framework for understanding Islamic cultures. With a specific reference to Malaysia, the framework developed in this thesis has added knowledge to the ways in which Islam becomes part of cultures and lifeways of Muslims in Southeast Asia. However, although this framework specifically represents the case of Malaysia, it is hoped that it could be used as a prompt for further research.

Second, the originality of this research rests on the amount of data gathered from the individual interviews, focus group discussion, and on data analysis. The recorded experiences of Muslims and non-Muslims who live in Islamic cultural context presented a strong area of validation. Opinions gathered from different groups of respondents using systematic method further reflect the diversity and breadth of real life experiences. All in all, the original results of this research would contribute to inform the policy

makers to consider the multiplicity nature of the society in their decision makings process.

Third, qualitative research has been criticised for not being clear in illustrating how researchers analyse their data. Due to this, qualitative research has been frequently alleged for not being thorough in its research practices. By adopting grounded theory as a method and methodology and employing NVivo software in assisting data analysis, this problem has been addressed. The constructivist grounded theory method has lent a suitable analytical approach while the use of NVivo has allowed data to be analysed transparently. Particularly, the search facility in NVivo used to interrogate data has added rigor to this study. For example, the search facility has been used to check the code 'prayer' within the whole data corpus. The use of this facility does not only save time but yields more reliable results. Therefore, this research is hoped to become another benchmark for future research to adopt CADQAS in assisting their research.

Fourth, the impact of this research will remain unknown without a proper plan. Therefore, a report which mainly presents contestations derived from the research data analysis will be prepared to be circulated to the respondents from government higher authority. It is hoped that this result would feed the authority with information necessary to improve their policies in catering the diverse citizens. Besides, as someone working in an educational institution, I am planning to present my research in conferences and publish in at least five articles in both international and local journals. While in reaching layperson, I will try to produce and offer my writing in Malaysian mainstream newspapers which hopefully will be accepted.

9.4 Future Directions for Research

It is suggested that future research could explore the same phenomenon in different states of Malaysia, such as in states where Islam is dominant or less dominant. Comparative analysis between these states might be useful to explain whether faith and state's Islamisation effort are still the determinant factors of strong Islamic cultures. This study will also open up ways to explore other possible new determinant factors that might influence the strength of Islamic cultures. Generally, it may provide an overview of the development and changes of Islamic cultures over a number of years in several states in Malaysia.

As the present study focuses on Malaysia in general, it is proposed that future research to consider exploring specific ethnic groups in Malaysia. For example, by exploring views from among Chinese or Indian communities, such a study would be able to discover whether or not Islamic cultures have been embedded in their cultural and religious values. The study would also unearth how Islamic cultures have posed negative influence on their cultural and religious values since Malaysia holds strongly to Islamic values. This focus would offer an in-depth insight into how and why Islamic cultures are perceived negatively, besides being political.

The research also intends to extend the use of the framework in another part of Southeast Asia in order to offer explanations on the embedment of Islamic cultures in their specific context. The research could offer an illustration of the ways in which Islam becomes part of cultures and practices of Muslims that could build up literature in the Southeast Asia.

This investigation also proposes to extend the study in the area of media, particularly travel journalism. Travel journalism projects images and cultural identity for international and local consumptions. For this reason, travel journalism rarely reveals tensions and conflicts in the society particular when the media producing travel related stories are government owned and controlled. As a cultural institution, travel journalism helps to propagate the state ideology to ensure hegemonic social order. Jarmakani (2013) stressed out that travel journalism as a crucial site for meaning making which could be seen as an arena to advance the state ideology. Travel journalism writing often provides an accessible point of entry into cultures, history, and its people and research on it would offer an interesting opportunity through which Islamic cultures could be explored. Therefore, travel texts offer a suitable space for exploring the issue of power and ideology as discussed in this research; such as by asking 'are any constructs in the travel texts resist or disrupt the state national ideology'?; whether or not travel journalism could be regarded as another site of contestation in Malaysia besides independent media and civil society actors?

Further, it is found in the study that the Malay-Muslims' preferential status has relegated non-Muslims to a secondary position or to the status of the 'other'. Researching on travel text would discover how other ethnicities are constructed; are these constructs consider other ethnicities (Chinese, India, and others) as the 'other' within the country. Travel journalism and its functions remain under-studied. Embarking a research in this area could be considered as a serious step to bring out travel journalism from the so-called less vital field to being at par with other journalism research areas.

9.5   Concluding Remarks

It is observed that the state ruling coalition's popularity has been decreasing and people's hatred has been mounting based on the 2008 and 2013 general elections. The country has shifted from one-party system to two-party system signifying the ruling party will continue to face stiff competition from opposition parties. Among the commonly projected reasons for the state's growing unpopularity has been due to deterioration in social-economic conditions, communal politics dissatisfaction such as marginalisation of non-*bumiputra* groups and the issue of NEP. Despite this, the ruling alliance of BN could still maintain its hegemony and retain their office as the leading party. This could be observed when BN won greater Malay-majority seats in 2013 after its bad performance in 2008 general elections (Pasuni, 2014). This marked Malay Muslim voters still hold strongly to the Islamic agenda as championed by the ruling party.

What could be drawn from this political scenario and the issue of hegemony is that the Muslims might not be ready for transformation to occur in the country. For the past 60 years, the majority of the Malay Muslims have enjoyed the better position, facilities, and special privileges. There might be some reluctance on their part to allow for a change to take place as they could not anticipate how the fate of Islam would be when a new ruling party whose political ideology is different comes to power. It is likely that due to this reason and its strong emphasis on the Islamic ideology, the ruling party has been successful in retaining its hegemony. But we must not be short-sighted that radical transformation will not occur in the near time as the power of the civil society actors and the public are not to be underestimated which have been explored in

Chapter 3 and Chapter 8. Hence, I believe the government should not misuse their comfortable position and should always work hard for the betterment of the society instead of mere political gain.

The study concludes that although Islamic cultures are the dominant culture, there exist different cultures that continue to influence Muslims and the culture of the society as a whole. To some extent, Islamic cultures similarly influence the life of the minority groups. This research has offered new findings on issues being explored in Chapter 6-8.

The topic of Islamic cultures is still open for discussion. Several significant issues might not have been explored deeply due to time and word count constraints. For example, the media in Malaysia which is an important entity to mobilise the state ideology could be developed further to add to the framework in future. However, the theoretical framework which has been developed in this thesis could be extended to other Southeast Asian countries where Islamic cultures might be dominant. This would illustrate how Islam becomes part of Muslims' cultures in the other part of Southeast Asia.

9.6   Reflexive Note

Completing a research requires a hard work especially in producing a thesis. This has not been an easy task for a wife and a mother to little kids. Without a continuous determination and encouragement by my supervisors, I would have stopped doing what I have been doing. I regard it as a learning process to prepare myself to

become more resilient to challenges and adversity that I have yet to face in future. I am glad that I have taken this path, away from the safe zone and from my family in Malaysia. I learn to be more independent, to survive and adapt to different cultural surroundings. Finishing this thesis has proven to be a road to uncover my potential and to gain new perspectives in life. Meeting new people and making new friends from all part of the world is indeed a precious experience besides producing a scholarly work.

REFERENCES

ABBASI, S. M., HOLLMAN, K. W., and MURREY JR, J. H., 1989. Islamic economics: Foundations and practices. *International Journal of Social Economics*, *16*(5), pp.5-17.

ABBOTT, J.P. and GREGORIOS-PIPPAS, S., 2010. Islamization in Malaysia: processes and dynamics. *Contemporary Politics*, *16*(2), pp.135-151.

ABDILLAH, NOH., 2014. Islam, public policy and public administration in Malaysia: negotiating complexities. *Administrative culture, 15*(2), pp.204-221.

ABDUL MUATI, AHMAD., 2010. Exploring roots, recognizing differences: Promoting inter-religious communication in Malaysia. *Human Communication. 13*(1), pp.43-56.

ABDUL MUATI, AHMAD., and SAIFUL NUJAIMI, ABDUL RAHMAN., 2009. Civilisational Islam: Promulgating the new approach of Islam in Malaysia. *Human Communication*, *12*(3), pp.303-324.

ABU-NIMER, M., 2001. A framework for nonviolence and peacebuilding in Islam. *Journal of Law and Religion*, *15*(2), pp.217-265.

AFIF, PASUNI., 2014. The tussle in Terengganu: Islamisation, shared languages and blurred identities. In M.O. Mohamed Nawab (Ed.), *The 13th Malaysia Elections: Issues, Trends, and Future Trajectories* (pp.7-23). Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

AHMAD FAUZI, ABDUL HAMID., 1999. Development in the post-colonial state: Class, capitalism, and the Islamist political alternative in Malaysia. *Kajian Malaysia*, *XVII*(2), pp.21-57.

AHMAD FAWZI, BASRI., 1992. The United Malays National Organization (UMNO) 1981-1991: A Study of the Mechanics of a changing political culture. Ph.D thesis, Centre For Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Hull.

ALASUUTARI, P., 1996. Theorizing in qualitative research: A cultural studies perspective *Qualitative Inquiry*, *2*(4), pp.371-384.

ALESINA, A., and ANGELETOS, G.M., 2005. Corruption, inequality, and fairness. *Journal of Monetary Economics*, *52*(7), pp.1227-1244.

ALI, N.G., 2015. Reading Gramsci through Fanon: Hegemony before dominance in revolutionary theory, rethinking Marxism. *Association for Economic and Social Analysis*, *27*(2), pp.241-257.

ALI, SALMAN., and MOHD SAFAR, HASIM., 2011. New media and democracy: The changing political landscape in Malaysia. *Akademika*, *81*(1), pp.15-21.

ALI, SALMAN., FARIDAH, IBRAHIM., MOHD YUSOF, HJ ABDULLAH., NORMAH, MUSTAFFA., and MAIZATUL, HAIZAN MAHBOB., 2011. The impact of new media on traditional mainstream mass media. *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal*, *16*(3), pp.1-11.

ALMA'AMUN, S., 2010. Islamic estate planning: Malaysian experience. *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, *3*(2), pp.165-185.

ALTHUSSER, L., 2006. Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation). In A. Sharma, and A. Gupta (Eds.). *The anthropology of the state: A reader*, (p.86-111). Australia: Blackwell Publishing.

AMER SAIFUDE, GHAZALI., MOHAMMAD REDZUAN, OTHMAN., ZULKANAIN, ABDUL RAHMAN., and ROSMADI, FAUZI., 2011. Politik etnik Malaysia: Analisis pasca pilihan raya umum ke 12 mengenai sokongan bukan melayu kepada UMNO dan PAS. M*alaysia Journal of Society and Space,* *7*(2), pp.18-27.

AMRULLAYEV, E., 2007. *The Culture of Islam and the concept of European Citizenship: antagonism and compatibility*. [online], Available at: http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/1668207/The_Culture_of_Islam_and_.pdf/19b2c fe7-27c7-4446-a95d-316d53bcdfa5 [Assessed on 12 March 2016]

AMSTEUS, M.N., 2014. The validity of divergent grounded theory method. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *13*(1), pp.71-87.

ANDREWS, L., HIGGINS, A., ANDREWS, M.W., and LALOR, J.G., 2012. Classic grounded theory to analyse secondary data: Reality and reflections. *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal, 11*(1), pp.12-27.

ANG, A., 1996. *Living room wards: Rethinking media audiences for a postmodern world.* London, New York: Routledge.

ARNIYUZIE, MOHD ARSHAD., 2015. Ulasan sistematik: Program *ulul albab* dalam sistem pendidikan di Malaysia. *Jurnal Kurikulum & Pengajaran Asia Pasifik, 3*(4), pp.22-35.

AUN, L.H., 2004. Development in Malaysia: Economics and politics of an idea. *Akademika, 64*, pp.65-81.

AVRUCH, K., 1998. Culture and Conflict Resolution. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

AZILAWATI, ROZAIMEE., WAN MALINI, WAN ISA., FADHILAH, AHMAD., SUHAILAN, SAFEI., and FAKHRUL ANWAR, ZAINOL., 2011. *Conceptual Framework for the Development of KAFA Courseware.* [online]. A paper presented at the International Conference on Future Information Technology IPCSIT, Press Singapore.

AZIM, F., 2011. Editorial introduction: Islam, culture, and women, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *12*(2), pp.173-175.

AZIRAH, HASHIM., 2009. Not plain sailing: Malaysia's language choice in policy and education. *AILA Review, 22*, pp.36–51.

AZMI, A. and SHAMSUL, A.B., 2004. The religious, the plural, the secular and the modern: A brief critical survey on Islam in Malaysia. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *5*(3), pp.341-356

BAILEY, O.G., and HARINDRANATH, R., 2005. Racialised 'othering'. In S. Allan (Ed.), *Journalism: Critical Issues* (pp.274-286). USA: Open University Press.

BALASUBRAMANIAM, V. 2007. A divided nation: Malay political dominance, bumiputra material advancement and national identity in Malaysia, *National Identities, 9*(1), pp.35-48.

BARNETT, D.A., 2012. Constructing new theory for identifying students with emotional disturbance: A grounded theory approach. *The Grounded Theory Review, 11*(1), pp.47-58.

BARR, M.D., and GOVINDASAMY, A.R., 2006. Hegemony without conversion: religious nationalism in modern Malaysia. *Comparative Political Studies*, *39*, pp.537-569.

BARR, M.D., and GOVINDASAMY, A.R., 2010. The Islamisation of Malaysia: Religious nationalism in the service of ethnonationalism. *Australian Journal of International Affairs, 64*(3), pp.293-311.

BARRACLOUGH, S., 1984. Political participation and its regulation in Malaysia: opposition to the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981. *Pacific Affairs, 57*(3), pp.450-461.

BEG, A., 2005. *Islam the way of life: Beliefs, rituals, customs, society, polity, economy*. America: Islamic Organisation of North America.

BELL, J., 1993. *Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. 2nd ed. London: Open University Press.

BERGHAMMER, C., and FLIEGENSCHNEE, K., 2014. Developing a concept of Muslim religiosity: An analysis of everyday lived religion among female migrants in Austria. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, *29*(1), pp.89-104.

BERTRAND, I., and HUGHES, P., 2005. *Media research methods: Audience, institutions, texts*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

BOEIJE, H., 2002. A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method in the analysis of qualitative interviews. *Quality & Quantity, 36*(4), pp.391–410.

BORELLI, J., 2008. *Interreligious Dialogue as a Spiritual Practice*. [online]. A paper presented at the Conference on Age of Global Challenges: Alternative Perspectives of the Hizmet Movement, Georgetown University, November.

BOWEN, G.A., 2009. Supporting a grounded theory with an audit trail: an illustration. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *12*(4), pp.305-316.

BRECKENRIDGE, J.P., JONES, D., ELLIOT, I., and NICOL, M., 2012. Choosing a methodological path: Reflections on the constructivist turn. *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal, 11*(1), pp.64-71.

BREUILLY, J., 1982. *Nationalism and the state.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

BRIAN, G. 2014. *Creating space for seldom heard voices*. Ph.D. thesis, the City University London.

BRIGHTON, S., 2007. British Muslims, multiculturalism and UK foreign policy: 'Integration' and 'cohesion' in and beyond the state. *International Affairs*, *83*(1), pp.1-17.

BROIDO, E.M., and MANNING, K., 2002. Philosophical foundations and current theoretical perspectives in qualitative research, *Journal of College Student Development, 43*(4), pp.434-445.

BROWN, D., 2004. *Why Independence? The instrumental and ideological dimensions of Acehnese nationalism.* [online]. A working paper for Asia Research Centre, July.

BROWN, G., 2005. The rough and rosy road: Sites of contestation in Malaysia's shackled media industry. *Pacific Affairs, 78*(1), pp.31-48.

BROWN. K., 2006. Realising Muslim women's rights: The role of Islamic identity among British Muslim women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *29*(4), pp.417-430.

BROWN, G.K., 2007. Making ethnic citizens: The politics and practice of education in Malaysia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *27*(3), pp.318-330.

BRYMAN, A., 2007. Barriers to integrating quantitative and qualitative research. *Journal of mixed methods research*, *1*(1), pp.8-22.

BURNARD, P., GILL, P.W., STEWART, K.F., TREASURE, E., and CHADWICK, B., 2008. Analysing and presenting qualitative data. *British Dental Journal, 204*(8), pp.429-432.

CABALLERO-ANTHONY, M., 2005. Political transitions in Southeast Asia, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, *1*, pp.24-44.

CAPPUCCIO, A.D.M., 2012. The relationship between dialect, theatre, and power in Antonio Gramsci. *The Italianist*, *32*(1), pp.67-83.

CARLSON, J., 2010. Avoiding traps in member checking. *The Qualitative Report*, *15*(5), pp.1102-1113.

CHAN, Z.C., FUNG, Y.L., and CHIEN, W.T., 2013. Bracketing in phenomenology: Only undertaken in the data collection and analysis process?. *The Qualitative Report*, *18*(59), p.1-9.

CHANG, TECK PENG., 2005. *News websites as windows of opportunities to alternative source of information: Malaysian experiences.* [online] A paper presented in the New Media and Social Transformation: Conference and Workshop, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, December 9-10.

CHAPRA, M.U., 2006. The nature of *riba* in Islam. *The Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance*, *2*(1), pp.7-25.

CHARMAZ, K., 1983. *The grounded theory method: an explication and interpretation*. In R.M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary field research* (pp.109-126). Boston: Little Brown.

CHARMAZ, K., 1990. 'Discovering' chronic Illness: Using grounded theory. *Social Science Medicine, 30*(11), pp.1161–1172.

CHARMAZ, K., 2000. *Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods*. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp.509-535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

CHARMAZ, K., 2001. Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J.F. Gubrium & J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp.675-694). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

CHARMAZ, K., 2006. *Constructing grounded theory: a practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London, UK: Sage.

CHARMAZ, K., 2008. Constructionism and the grounded theory method. In J.A., Holstein & J.F., Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of Constructionist Research* (pp.397-412). New York: The Guilford Press.

CHARMAZ, K., 2012. The power and potential of grounded theory. *Medical Sociology Online, 6*(3), pp.1-15.

CHEUK, S., LIEW-TSONIS, J., ING, G.P., and, RAZLI, I.A., 2010. An identification of the effects of the promotion of tourism transportation on the socio-cultural environment: The case of Malaysia. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 12*(3), pp.430-440.

CHIN, YONG LIOW., 2004. Exigency or Expediency? Contextualising political Islam and the PAS challenge in Malaysian politics. *Third World Quarterly, 25*(2), pp.359-372.

CHO, J.Y., and LEE, E.H., 2014. Reducing confusion about grounded theory and qualitative content analysis: Similarities and differences. *The Qualitative Report, 19*(64), pp.1-20.

CHONG, B.S., and LIU, M.H., 2009. Islamic banking: Interest-free or interest based?. *Pacific-Basin Finance Journal, 17*(1), pp.125-144.

COONEY, A., 2010. Choosing between Glaser and Strauss: an example. *Nurse Researcher, 17(4), pp.18-28.*

CORBIN A., and STRAUSS, A.L., 2015. *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* 4th ed. USA: Sage Publications.

CORBIN, J.M., and STRAUSS, A.L., 1990. Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology, 13*(1), pp.3-21.

CORBIN, J.M., and STRAUSS, A.L., 2008. *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* 3rd ed. London: Sage Publication.

COX, R.W., 1983. Gramsci, hegemony, and international relations: An essay in method. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, *12*(2), pp.162-175.

COYNE, I.T., 1997. Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling; merging or clear boundaries. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 26,* pp.623-630.

CRESWELL, J.W., 2007. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. 2nd ed. United States of America: Sage Publications.

CRESWELL, J.W., 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches,* Sage Publications, Los Angeles.

CRESWELL, J.W., and MILLER, D.L., 2000. Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, *39*(3), pp.124-130.

CROTTY, M., 1998. *The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: Sage.

CROUCH, H., 1996. *Government and society in Malaysia*. New South Wales: Allen & Unwin Australia Ptd Ltd.

DALDAL, A., 2014. Power and ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci: A comparative analysis. *Review of History and Political Science*, *2*(2), pp.149-167.

DE CREMER, D., 2002. Respect and cooperation in social dilemmas: The importance of feeling Included. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *28*(10), pp.1335-1341.

DILLON, M. *1999. Catholic identity: Balancing reason, faith, and power.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

DUFFY, K., and WATSON, H., 2002. Data collecting in grounded theory: some practical issues. *Nurse Researcher, 11*(4), pp.67-78.

DURHAM, M.G., and KELLNER, D.M., 2009. *Media and cultural studies: Keyworks*. USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Economic Analytical Unit, 2005. Malaysia: An Economy transformed [online] Available at: http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/malaysia_an_economy_transformed/malaysia_report.pdf [Accessed: 12 April 2013]

EHRKAMP, P., 2005. Placing identities: Transnational practices and local attachments of Turkish immigrants in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies*, *31*(2), pp.345-364.

EICKELMAN, D.F., 1981. *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*. London: Prentice-Hall.

EICKELMAN, D.F., 1982. The study of Islam in local contexts. *Contributions to Asian Studies, 17*, pp.1-16.

ELLINGWOOD, J., 2008. The Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA): An Evolutionary Perspective. *The Muslim World*, *98*(1), pp.72-94.

ELLIOTT, R., FISCHER, C.T. AND RENNIE, D.L., 1999. Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *38*(3), pp.215-229.

EL-SHEIKH, SALAH., 2010. Implementing Islamic Law Within a Modern Constitutional Framework: Challenges and Problems in Contemporary Malaysia. *Islam and Civilisational Renewal*, *1*(3), p.445.

EMBONG, A.R., 2002. Malaysia as a Multicivilisational Society. *Macalester International*, *12*, pp.36-58.

EVANS, G.L., 2013. A novice researcher's first walk through the maze of grounded theory: Rationalization for classical grounded theory. *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal, 12*(1), pp.37-55.

EZHAR, TAMAM., 2009. Influence of interethnic contact on interethnic attitudes of Malay and Chinese-Malaysian university students in Malaysia. *Human Communication*, *12*(1), pp.53-66.

FADIL, N., 2013. Performing the salat [Islamic prayers] at work: Secular and pious Muslims negotiating the contours of the public in Belgium. *Ethnicities*, p.1-22.

FARIDAH, JALIL., 2009. *Role of monarchy and traditional rulers in Malaysia*. [online] A paper presented at the Conference on Constitutional Law, Washington DC, USA, September 11-12.

FAUZIAH, AHMAD., SAMSUDIN, A. RAHIM., LATIFFAH, PAWANTEH., ABDUL LATIF, AHMAD., MOHD FAIRUL HISHAM, ZAINAL., and NUR ROZIYANA, AHMAT @ OSMAN., 2012. Social Citizenship: Rights, Participation and Responsibilities of Young People. *Asian Social Science, 8*(5), pp.132-140.

FERNANDO, J.M., 2006. The position of Islam in the constitution of Malaysia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *37*(2), pp.249-266.

FIELDING, N., 1994. Varieties of research interviews. *Nurse Researcher. 1*(3), pp.4-13.

FINLAY, L., 2002. Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative research*, *2*(2), pp.209-230.

FISCHLER, C., 1988. Food, self and identity. *Social science information*, *27*(2), pp.275-292.

FITZGERALD, M.H., MULLAVEY-O'BYRNE, C. and CLEMSON, L., 2001. Families and nursing home placements: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of cross-cultural gerontology*, *16*(4), pp.333-351.

FORD, K., 2010. *Reframing a sense of self: A Constructivist grounded theory study of children's admission to hospital for surgery*. Ph.D. thesis, The University of Tasmania.

FORRESTER, M.A., 2010. *Doing Qualitative Research in Psychology: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.

FORTE, G., and MIGLIETTA, F., 2007. Islamic mutual funds as faith-based funds in a socially responsible context. *Working paper,* [online]. Available at: https://boa.unimib.it/retrieve/handle/10281/15210/19437/Islamic%20mutual%20funds%20as%20faith-based%20funds.pdf [Accessed: 1 December 2015]

FRAM, S.M., 2013. The constant comparative analysis method outside of grounded theory. *Qualitative Report*, *18*(1), pp.1-25.

FREY, J.H., and MONTANA, A., 1991.The group interview in social research. *The Social Science Journal*, *28*(2), pp.175-187.

FUZIAH KARTINI, HASSAN BASRI., ABDUL LATIFF, AHMAD., EMMA MIRZA WATI, MOHAMAD., ARINA ANIS, AZLAN., and HASRUL, HASHIM., 2011. The survival of Malaysia's national television within a changing mediascape. *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal, 16*(3), pp.1-13.

GARDNER, A., MCCATCHEON, H., FEDORUK, M., 2012. Discovering Constructivist Grounded Theory's fit and relevance to researching contemporary mental health nursing practice. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *30*(2), pp.66-74.

GEERTZ, C., 1957. Ritual and social change: a Javanese example. *American Anthropologist 59*(1), pp.32-54.

GELDERS, D., and IHLEN, O., 2010. Government communication about potential policies: Public relations, propaganda or both?. *Public Relations Review*, *36*(1), pp.59-62.

GELLNER, E., 1983. *Muslim society*. Australia: Cambridge University Press.

GENTLES, S.J., JACK, S.M., NICHOLAS, D.B., and MCKIBBON, K., 2014. Critical approach to reflexivity in grounded theory. *The Qualitative Report*, *19*(44), pp.1-14.

GEORGE, C., 2003. The internet and the narrow tailoring dilemma for Asian democracies. *The Communication Review*, *6*, pp.247–268.

GEORGE, C., 2005. The internet's political impact and the penetration /participation paradox in Malaysia and Singapore. *Media Culture Society*, *27*(6), pp.903-920.

GEORGE, C., 2007. Media in Malaysia: Zone of Contention, *Democratization, 14*(5), pp.893-910.

GERRARD, P., and CUNNINGHAM, J.B., 1997. Islamic banking: A study in Singapore. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *15*(6), pp.204-216.

GHADAMI, M., 2012. The role of Islam in the tourism industry. *Management Arts*, *52*, pp.11204-11209.

GIBBS, G.R., 2002. *Qualitative data analysis: explorations with NVivo*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

GIGER, J.N. and DAVIDHIZAR, R., 2002. Culturally competent care: emphasis on understanding the people of Afghanistan, Afghanistan Americans, and Islamic culture and religion. *International Nursing Review*, *49*(2), pp.79-86.

GILES, T., KING, L., and DE LACEY, S., 2013. The timing of the literature review in grounded theory research. An open mind versus an empty head. *Advances in Nursing Science*, *36*(2), E29-E40.

GILLMOR, D., 2004. *We the media: Grassroots journalism for the people, by the people*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly.

GLASER, B., 1992. *Basics of grounded theory analysis: emergence vs. forcing*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

GLASER, B.G., and HOLTON, J., 2004. Remodeling grounded theory. *Qualitative Social Research*, *5*(2) [online]. Available at: http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/607/1315 [Accessed 10 February 2015].

GOMEZ, E.T., 2012. The politics and policies of corporate development: race, rents, and redistribution in Malaysia. In H. Hill., T.S. Yean, R. Mat Zin (Eds.), *Malaysia's development challenges: Graduating from the middle* (pp.63-82). USA: Routledge.

GOMEZ, J., and HAN, LEONG CHANG., 2010. *New Media and General Elections: Online Citizen Journalism in Malaysia and Singapore*. [online] A paper presented at the Malaysia and Singapore Workshop: Media, Law, Social Commentary, Politics, The University of Melbourne, Australia. June 10-11.

GOMEZ, J., and ROSYIDAH, MUHAMAD., 2010. New *media and electoral democracy*: *online opposition in Malaysia and Singapore*. [online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/379592/New_Media_and_Electoral_Democracy_Online_Opposition_in_Malaysia_and_Singapore [Accessed: 12 January 2014]

GORRA, A., KORNILAKI, M., 2010. Grounded theory: Experiences of two studies with a focus on axial coding and the use of the NVivo qualitative analysis software. *Methodology: Innovative approaches to research*, *1*(Spring), pp.30-32.

GRAHAM, J., and HAIDT, J., 2010. Beyond beliefs: Religions bind individuals into moral communities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *14*(1), pp.140-150.

GRAHAM, W.A., 1993. Traditionalism in Islam: An essay in interpretation. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, *23*(3), pp.495-522.

GRAMSCI, A., 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* Edited and translated by Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith. London: Lawrence and Hishart.

GRAY, E.G., 2004. *Doing research in the real world.* London/Thousand Oak/New Delhi: SAGE Publications Inc.

GROSHEK, J., and YING, HAN., 2011. Negotiated hegemony and reconstructed boundaries in alternative media coverage of globalization. *International Journal of Communication*, *5*, pp.1523–1544.

GRUDGINGS, S., and AL-ZAQUAN, AMER HAMZAH., 2013. Malaysia's governing coalition extended its half-century rule despite its worst-ever performance in a general election, a result that exposes growing racial polarization in the Southeast Asian nation and could undermine Prime Minister Najib Razak. Reuters [online], Available at: http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/05/us-malaysia-election-idUSBRE9430B720130505 [Accessed: 17 June 2013]

GUAN, L.H., 2004. Civil Society in Southeast Asia. In L.H. Guan (Ed.), *Civil Society in Southeast Asia* (pp.1-26). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

GUBA, E.G. and LINCOLN, Y.S., 1994. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N.K., Denzin & Y.S., Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

GUBA, E.G., and LINCOLN, Y.S., 1981. *Effective Evaluation.* London: Jossey-Bass.

HAIRUNNIZAM, WAHID., SANEP, AHMAD., and RADIAH, ABDUL KADER., 2009. *Distribution of zakat to the eight asnaf: Malaysian case*. [online]. A paper presented at Seminar Kebangsaan Ekonomi Islam 2008/09, Akademi Pengajian Islam, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, February 10-11.

HALIMAHTON, SHAARI., NGU, TECK HUA., and RAMAN, V., 2006. Covering race and religion: The Moorthy and Nyonya Tahir cases in four Malaysian newspapers. *Kajian Malaysia*, *XXIV*(1 & 2), pp.185-201.

HALIMA-SA'ADIA, KASSIM., 2011. *Institutionalising Islam: Community building and conflict in the Caribbean*. [online] A paper presented at The Global South Asian Diaspora in the 21st century. The university of the West Indies: Antecedents and Prospects, UWI St. Augustine, June 1-4 June.

HALL, S., 1977. Culture, the media and the 'ideological effect'. In J. CURRAN, M. GUREVITCH, and J. WOLLACOTT, (Eds.), *Mass Communication and Society* (pp.119-138). London: Edwaard Arnold in association with the Open University Press.

HALL, S., 1996. Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. In M. DAVID, and K.H. CHEN (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies,* (pp. 411-440). London: Routledge.

HALL, S., 1997. The spectacle of the 'other'. In S. HALL (Ed.), *Representation: Culture, representation and signifying practices*, (pp.223-290). London: Sage.

HALLBERG, L.R., 2006. The "core category" of grounded theory: Making constant comparisons. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, *1*(3), pp.141-148.

HALSTEAD, J.M., 2007. Islamic values: A distinctive framework for moral education. *Journal of Moral Education*, *36*(3), pp.283-296.

HAMAYOTSU, K., 2002. Islam and nation building in SE Asia: Malaysia and Indonesia in a comparative perspective. *Pacific Affairs*, *75*(3), pp.353-376.

HAMILTON-HART, N., 2001. Anti-corruption strategies in Indonesia, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, *37*(1), pp.65-82.

HAN, H.R., CHOI, Y.J., KIM, M.T., LEE, J.E. and KIM, K.B., 2008. Experiences and challenges of informal caregiving for Korean immigrants. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *63*(5), pp.517-526.

HAQUE, A.K.M., 2010. Islamic banking in Malaysia: a study of attitudinal differences of Malaysian customers. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, *18*, pp.7-18.

HAQUE, M.S., 2003. The Role of the state in managing ethnic tensions in Malaysia: A critical discourse. *American Behavioural Scientist*, *47*(3), pp.240-266.

HASMAH, ZANUDDIN., 2007. Political influence in Malaysia and Thailand's media sector. *Jati, 12*, pp.71-82.

HEARMAN, V., 2013. Sources and Methodologies: History: Southeast Asia. In S. JOSEPH (Ed.), *Women and Islamic Cultures: Disciplinary Paradigms and Approaches: 2003 – 2013* (pp.177-202). Leiden: Brill.

HEATH, H., and COWLEY, S., 2004. Developing a grounded theory approach: A comparison of Glaser and Strauss. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 41*(2), pp.141-150.

HEFNER, R.W., 1997. Islam in an era of nationstates: politics and religious renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia. In, R.W. Hefner, and P. Horvatich, (Eds.), *Islam in an era of nationstates* (pp.3-40). United State of America: University of Hawaii Press.

HELLAWELL, D., 2006. Inside–out: analysis of the insider–outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research. *Teaching in higher education*, *11*(4), pp.483-494.

HELWA, MOHAMMAD ZAINAL., and JASRI, JAMAL., 2013. The Legal Position of Apostasy and Spreading of Non-Islamic Teachings in Malaysia: Analysis and challenges, *Jurnal Undang-Undang dan Masyarakat, 17*, pp. 13-36.

HENDERSON, J.C., 2003. Managing tourism and Islam in peninsular Malaysia. *Tourism Management*, *24*(4), pp.447-456.

HENDERSON, J.C., 2010. Sharia-compliant hotels. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, *10*(3), pp.246-254.

HENKEL, H., 2005. Between belief and unbelief lies the performance of *salāt'*: Meaning and efficacy of a Muslim ritual. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 11*(3), pp.487-507.

HEUFERS, R., 2002. The politics of democracy in Malaysia. *Asien, 85*, pp.39-60.

HEWITT, S., 2009. Discourse analysis and public policy research. *Centre for rural economy discussion paper series*, *24*, pp.1-16.

HEWITT-TAYLOR, J., 2001. Use of constant comparative analysis in qualitative research. *Nursing Standard, 15*(42), pp.39- 42.

HILLEY, J., 2001. *Malaysia: Mahathirism, hegemony and the new opposition*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

HILLEY, J.W., 2000. *Contesting the vision: Mahathirism, the power bloc and the crisis of hegemony in Malaysia.* Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow.

HOCHEL, S., 2013. To Veil or Not to Veil: Voices of Malaysian Muslim Women. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *22*(2), pp.40-57.

HODGE, D.R., 2005. Social work and the house of Islam: Orienting practitioners to the beliefs and values of Muslims in the United States. *Social Work*, *50*(2), pp.162-173.

HOLLER-FAM, M., 2015. Malaysia's civil society in light of the Bersih movement, [online], Available at: https://th.boell.org/en/2015/12/16/malaysias-civil-society-light-bersih-movement [Accessed on 16 July 2016]

HOLLIDAY, S.J., 2016. The legacy of subalternity and Gramsci's national–popular: populist discourse in the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran. *Third World Quarterly, 37*(5), pp.917-933.

HOLTON, J.A., 2010. The coding process and its challenges. *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal, 9*(1), pp.21-40.

HOOVER, S.M., 2008. Media and religion. *The Center for Media, religion, and Culture,* [online], Available at: https://rolandoperez.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/media-and-religion.pdf [Accessed: 10 December, 2014].

HOUBEN. V.J.H., 2003. Islam: Enduring myths and changing realities: Southeast Asia and Islam. *The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 588*(149), pp.1-17.

HSIUNG, P.C., 2008. Teaching reflexivity in qualitative interviewing. *Teaching Sociology*, *36*(3), pp.211-226.

HUGHES, J., and JONES, S., 2003. *Reflections on the Use of Grounded Theory in Interpretive Information Systems Research*. [online]. A Proceeding paper at the European Conference of Information System *2003* Proceedings, Paper 62.

HUMPHREYS, M., and BROWN, A.D., 2002. Dress and identity: A Turkish case study. *Journal of Management Studies*, *39*(7), pp.927-952.

HUTCHISON, A.J., JOHNSTON, L.H., and BRECKON, J.D., 2010. Using QSR-NVivo to facilitate the development of a grounded theory project: An account of a worked example. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *13*(4), pp.283-302.

HWANG, J.C., 2009. *Peaceful Islamist mobilization in the Muslim world: What went right*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

IHSANOGLU, E., 2003. *The different aspects of Islamic culture*. 5th ed. Lebanon: Unesco Publishing.

ISMAIL, R., 2012. The Saudi Ulema and the Shi'a of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, *5*(4), pp.403-422.

JAFFARY, A., 2000. The notion of ummah in a multi-racial society: The Malaysia experience. *Journal of Usuluddin*, *12*(134)*, pp. 129-136.

JALLAD, N.A., 2008. The concepts of *al-halal* and *al-haram* in the Arab-Muslim culture: A translational and lexicographical study. *Language design: journal of theoretical and experimental linguistics*, *10*, pp.77-86.

JARMAKANI, A., 2013. Women and gender studies. In S. Joseph, (Ed.), *Women and Islamic Cultures – Disciplinary Paradigms and Approaches: 2003-2013* (pp.51-64), United Kingdom: Brill.

JOHNSON, L., 2014. Adapting and combining constructivist grounded theory and discourse analysis: A practical guide for research. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, *8*(1), pp.100-116.

JOMO, K.S., and TAN, W.S., 2003. *Privatization and renationalization in Malaysia: A survey*. [online], Available at: *http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan021546.pdf* [Accessed: 12 November 2015].

JONES, M., and ALONY, I., 2011. Guiding the use of grounded theory in doctoral studies –an example from the Australian film industry. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, *6*, pp.95-114.

JONES, S.R., 2002. (Re)writing the word: Methodological strategies and issues in qualitative research. *Journal of College Student Development,43*(4), pp.461-473.

JORGENSEN, M.W. and PHILLIPS, L.J., 2002. *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London: Sage.

JOUILI, J.S., 2009. Negotiating secular boundaries: Pious micro-practices of Muslim women in French and German public spheres. *Social Anthropology*, *17*(4), pp.455-470.

JOUILI, J.S., and AMIR-MOAZAMI, S., 2006. Knowledge, empowerment and religious authority among pious Muslim women in France and Germany. *The Muslim World*, *96*(4), pp.617-642.

JUERGENSMEYER, M., 2010. The global rise of religious nationalism. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *64*(3), pp.262-273.

KADIR, H.DIN., 1982. Tourism in Malaysia competing needs in a plural society. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *9*(3), pp.453-480.

KAMAL, NASER., AHMAD, JAMAL., and KHALID, AL-KHATIB., 1999. Islamic banking: A study of customer satisfaction and preferences in Jordan. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *17*(3), pp.135 – 151.

KAUFFMAN, S., 2008. Malaysia's alternative media become decisive political factor: More than 70 percent of voters in March 8 elections were influenced by blogs. *IIP Digital* [online blog]. 3 April 2008. Available at: http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2008/04/20080403175441esna mfuak0.1705591.html#axzz2qNClSjXs [Accessed: 10 March 2013]

KENYON, A. T. and MARJORIBANKS, T., 2007. Transforming media markets: The cases ofMalaysia and Singapore. *Australian Journal of Emerging Technology and Society*. *5*(2), pp.103-118.

KERR, D.A., 2000. Islamic Da'wa and Christian mission: Towards a comparative analysis. *International Review of Mission*, *89*(353), pp.150-171.

KHOO, B.T., 2012. Islam and political dissent in Malaysia: The remarkable trajectory of party Islam (PAS). In Khoo, B.T., Hadiz, V., and Nakanishi, Y., (Eds.), *Islam

and political dissent: Studies and comparisons from Asia and the Middle East. Interim report. Australia: Murdoch University.

KHOO, B.T., 2013. 13th General election in Malaysia: Overview and summary. [online], Available   at: http://www.ide.go.jp/Japanese/Publish/Download/Kidou/pdf/2013_malaysia_03. pdf [Accessed: 12 July 2016].

KILP, A., 2011. Religion in the construction of the cultural 'self' and 'other'. *ENDC Proceedings*, *14*, pp.197-222.

KIM, W.L., 2001. Media and democracy in Malaysia. *The Public, 8*(2), pp. 67-88.

KIRBY, M., 2008. fundamental human rights and religious apostasy: The Malaysian case of Lina Joy. *Griffith Law Review*, *17*(1), pp.151-182.

KIRKHAM, J.A., SMITH, J.A., and HAVSTEEN-FRANKLIN, D., 2015. Painting pain: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of representations of living with chronic pain. *Health Psychology*, *34*(4), p.398-406.

KOON, H., 1997. The new economic policy and the Chinese community in Peninsular Malaysia. *The Developing Economies*, *35*(3), pp.262-292.

KRAUSS, S.E., AZIMI H, HAMZAH., TURIMAN, SUANDI., SIDEK M, NOAH., RUMAYA, JUHARI., JAMIAH H, MANAP., KHAIRUL A, MASTOR., HASNAN, KASSAN., and AZMA, MAHMOOD., 2006. Exploring regional differences in religiosity among Muslim youth in Malaysia. *Review of Religious Research, 47*(3), pp.238-252.

L'ETANG, J., 2006. Public relations and propaganda: Conceptual issues, methodological problems and public relations discourse. In J. L'Etang, & M. Pieczka (Eds.), *Public relations: Critical debates and contemporary practice* (pp.23-40). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

LANDAU, I., 2008. Law and civil society in Cambodia and Vietnam: A Gramscian perspective. *Journal of Contemporary Asia, 38*(2), pp.244-258.

LAWRENCE, J., and TAR, U., 2013. The use of grounded theory technique as a practical tool for qualitative data collection and analysis. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods, 11*(1), pp.29-40.

358

LEAR., J.C., 2014. *Preventing placement disruption: How do foster carers experience and explain the process?*. Ph.D. thesis, The University of Leeds.

LEARS, T.J., 1985. The concept of cultural hegemony: Problems and possibilities. *The American Historical Review*, *90*(3), pp.567-593.

LEE, C., 2013. Malaysia's GE13: A tale of two manifestos. *ISEAS Perspective, 24*, pp.1-11.

LEE, H.G., 2004. Introduction: Civil society in Southeast Asia. In H.G. Lee, (Ed.), *Civil Society in Southeast Asia* (pp.198-216). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

LEE, R.L., 1990. The state, religious nationalism, and ethnic rationalisation in Malaysia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *13*(4), pp.482-502.

LEE, S.K., LEE, K.S., WONG, F.F., AND AZIZAH, Y., 2010. The English language and its impact on identities of multilingual Malaysian undergraduates. *Online^{TM} Journal of Language Studies, 10*(1), pp.87-101.

LEONG, W.T., 1989. Culture and the state: Manufacturing traditions for tourism. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *6*(4), pp.355-375.

L'ETANG, J., 1998. State propaganda and bureaucratic intelligence: The creation ofpublic relations in 20th century Britain. *Public Relations Review*,*24*(4), pp.413-441.

LIM, K.H., 2008. Political volcano in 12th Malaysian general election: Makkal Sakhti (people power) against communal politics, "3Cs" and marginalization of Malaysian Indian. *Journal of Politics and Law, 1*(3), pp.84-101.

LIM, MING KUOK., 2007. *The State of Media Control in Malaysia.* [online] A paper presented in International Communication Association 2007 Annual Meeting, Malaysia.

LIOW, J.C.Y., 2004. Exigency or expediency? Contextualising political Islam and the PAS challenge in Malaysian politics. *Third World Quarterly*, *25*(2), pp.359-372.

LIOW, J.C.Y., 2011. Creating cadres: Mobilization, activism and the youth wing of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, PAS. *Pacific Affairs*, *84*(4), pp.665-686.

LIOW, J.C.Y., and AFIF, PASUNI., 2010. Debating the Conduct and Nature of Malaysian Politics: Communalism and New Media Post-March 2008. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *29*(4), pp.39-65.

LIPSET, S.M., 1959. Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy. *American Political Science Review, 53*, pp.69-105.

MACK, L. 2010. The philosophical underpinnings of educational research. *Polyglossia, 19*, pp.5-11.

MACK, N., WOODSONG, C., MACQUEEN, K.M., GUEST, G., and NAMEY, E., 2005. *Qualitative Research Methods: A data collector's field guide*. USA: Family Health International.

MARTIN, D., 2014. Gender, Malayness and the Ummah: Cultural Consumption and Malay-Muslim Identity, *Asian Studies Review, 38*(3), pp.403-421.

MARTINEZ, P., 2001. The Islamic state or the state of Islam in Malaysia. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *23*(3), pp.474-503.

MARZUKI, M., 2008. Religion, Human Rights and Constitutional-Contract Politics in Malaysia. *Intellectual Discourse*, *16*(2), pp.155-186.

MAUTHNER, N.S. and DOUCET, A., 2003. Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology*, *37*(3), pp.413-431.

MAUZY, D., 2006. From Malay nationalism to a Malaysian nation?. In L., Barrington (Ed.), *After independence: Making and protecting the nation in postcolonial and postcommunist states* (pp.45-70), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

MAZNAH, MOHAMAD., 2010a. The ascendance of bureaucratic Islam and the secularization of the Sharia in Malaysia. *Pacific Affairs*, pp.505-524.

MAZNAH, MOHAMAD., 2010b. Making majority, undoing family: Law, religion and the Islamization of the state in Malaysia. *Economy and Society*, *39*(3), pp.360-384.

MCCALLIN, A., 2003. Grappling with the literature in a grounded theory Study. *Contemporary Nurse, 15*(12), pp.61-69.

MCCANN, T., and CLARK, E., 2003. Grounded theory in nursing research: Part 1- methodology. *Nurse Researcher, 11*(2), pp.7-18.

MCGUIRE, M.B., 2008. *Religion: The social context*. 5th ed. Illinois, USA: Waveland Press.

MCMULLEN, M., 2000. *The Baha'i: The religious construction of a global identity.* New Brunswick, N J: Rutgers University Press.

MCNAIR, R., TAFT, A., and HEGARTY, K., 2009. Using reflexivity to enhance in-depth interviewing skills for the clinician researcher. *BMC Medical Research Methodology, 8*(37), pp.1-6.

MD NOR, OTHMAN., and AZURA HANIM, HASHIM., 2010. *Consumer perception and behaviour towards halal food consumption*. [online] A paper presented at the 1st International Conference on Islamic Marketing and Branding (Icimb): Exploring Issues and Challenges, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. November 29-30.

MILES, L., and CROUCHER, R., 2013. Gramsci, counter-hegemony and Labour Union–Civil society organisation coalitions in Malaysia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *43*(3), pp.413-427.

MILLER, D.T., 2001. Disrespect and the experience of injustice. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*, pp.527-553.

MILLER, E., 2004. The role of Islam in Malaysian political practice. *The Fletcher School Online Journal for Issues related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilisation*, *4*, pp.1-10.

MILLS, J., BONNER, A., and FRANCIS, K., 2006a. The development of constructivist grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *5*(1), pp.25-35.

MILLS, J., BONNER, A., and FRANCIS, K., 2006b. Adopting a constructivist approach to grounded theory: Implications for research design. *International Journal of Nursing Practice, 12*(1), pp.8-13.

MILNER, A.C., 1981. Islam and Malay Kingship. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1,* pp.46-70.

MITCHELL, C., 2006. The religious content of ethnic identities. *Sociology*, *40*(6), pp.1135-1152.

MOHAMAD, ABU BAKAR., 1981. Islamic revivalism and the political process in Malaysia. *Asian Survey*, *21*(10), pp.1040-1059.

MOHAMED HASHIM, AHMAD MAKARUDDIN., 2006. The future of the newspaper industry in Malaysia in the era of global media and global culture. *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, *22*, pp.155-161.

MOHAMED MUSTAFA, ISHAK., 1999. From plural society to Bangsa Malaysia: Ethnicity and nationalism in the politics of nation-building in Malaysia. Ph.D. thesis, The University of Leeds.

MOHAMED NAWAB, MOHAMED OSMAN., 2014. Introduction. In Mohamed Osman, M.N. (Ed.), *The 13th Malaysia elections: Issues, trends, and future trajectories* (pp.7-23). Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

MOHAMED OSMAN, M.N., and SALEEM, S., 2016. *The impact of Islamic civil society organisations on Malaysian Islam and Politics*. [online], Available at: http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Malaysia-Update-April-2016_Copy_Finalised.pdf [Accessed: 10 June, 2016].

MOHAMED, ARIFF., and SYARISA YANTI, ABU BAKAR., 1999. The Malaysian financial crisis: Economic impact and recovery prospects. *The Developing Economies*, *37*(4), pp.417-38.

MOHD AZIZUDDIN, MOHD SANI., 2004. Media freedom in Malaysia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *35*(3), pp.341 – 367.

MOHD MUZHAFAR, IDRUS., RUZY SULIZA, HASHIM., and RAIHANAH, M.M., 2015. Malay cultural identities: A review. *Humanities and Social Sciences Letters*, *3*(1), pp.1-9.

MOHD NIZAM, SAHAD., SITI AISHAH, CHU ABDULLAH., and SUHAILA, ABDULLAH., 2013. Malaysian News Report on Muslim Converts' Issues: A

Study on Malaysiakini. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 3*(13), pp.219-230.

MOHD NOR SHAHIZAN, ALI., MAT PAUZI, ABD RAHMAN., HASRUL, HASHIM., and NORMAH, MUSTANA., 2012. Freedom of photography - the Malaysian scenario: A vital element of press freedom. *Asian Social Science, 8*(5), pp.38-45.

MOORE, K.M., 2007. Visible through the veil: The regulation of Islam in American law. *Sociology of Religion*, *68*(3), pp.237-251.

MORROW, S.L., 2005. Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counselling psychology. *Journal of counselling psychology*, *52*(2), pp.250-260.

MOUSER, A., 2007. Defining 'modern' Malay womanhood and the coexistent message of the veil. *Religion, 37*, 164-174.

MUHAMMAD, B. AHMAD., 2009. *The influence of culture on Malay Muslim Business Practice: A case study of Malaysia with special reference to the state of Kelantan Dar al-Na'im*. Ph.D. thesis, The University of Birmingham.

MUHAMMAD, NAEEM., and MIAN MUJAHID, SHAH., 2013. Filial piety in Confucianism and Islam: A comparative study. *Acta Islamica*, *1*(1), pp.1-33.

MUSTAFA, K. ANUAR., 2005a. Politics and the media in Malaysia. *Philippine Journal of Third World Studies, 20*(1), pp.25-47.

MUSTAFA, K. ANUAR., 2005b. Journalism, national development and social justice in Malaysia. *Asia Pacific Media Educator, 16*(9), pp.63-70.

NADIA, FADIL., 2013. Performing the *salat* [Islamic prayers] at work: Secular and pious Muslims negotiating the contours of the public in Belgium. *Ethnicities*, *13*(6), pp.729-750.

NAGATA, J. 1980. Religious Ideology and Social Change: The Islamic Revival in Malaysia. *Pacific Affairs, 53*(3), pp.405-439.

NEFF, J., POTTS, L., and WHITHAUS, C., 2011. Collaborative methodologies for new media research: Using grounded theory and contextual inquiry. In L. McGrath

(Ed.), *Collaborative approaches to the digital in English studies* (pp.11-42). Logan: Utah State University Press.

NEO, J.L.C., 2006. Malay nationalism, Islamic supremacy and the constitutional bargain in the multi-ethnic composition of Malaysia. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, *13*(1), pp.95-118.

NEUMAN, W.L., 2011. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. USA: Allyn and Bacon.

NIKANDER, P., 2008. Constructionism and discourse analysis. In J.A. Holstein and J.F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp.413-428). New York: The Guilford Press.

NOOR HAZARINA, HASHIM., MURPHY, J., AND NAZLIDA, MUHAMAD HASHIM., 2007. Islam and online imagery on Malaysian tourist destination websites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*, pp.1082-1102.

NOORE ALAM, SIDDIQUEE., 2010. Combating corruption and managing integrity in Malaysia: A critical overview of recent strategies and initiatives. *Public Organiz Rev, 10,* pp.153-171.

NORAZLINA, ABDUL WAHAB., and ABDUL RAHIM, ABDUL RAHMAN., 2011. A framework to analyse the efficiency and governance of zakat institutions. *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, *2*(1), pp.43-62.

NORHAZRIAH, MOHAMED., 2012. Program ulul albab suatu proses transformasi pendidikan Malaysia: Kajian kes Sekolah Menengah Imtiaz, Terengganu. Paper presented at Workshop Antarabangsa Pembangunan Berteraskan Islam V (WAPI-5), 10 April, Kampus Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera (UMSU), Indonesia.

NORRIS, P., and INGLEHART, R., 2002. Islamic culture and democracy: Testing the 'clash of civilizations' thesis. *Comparative Sociology, 1*(3-4), pp.235-263

NORUNNAJJAH, AHMAT., and AKDOGAN, C., 2012. *Trust (al-amanah): A comparative study of its application in Islamic and western science*. [online] A paper presented at the Asian Conference on Ethics, Religion & Philosophy, Osaka, Japan.

O'SHANNASSY, M., 2008. Beyond the Barisan Nasional? A Gramscian perspective of the 2008 Malaysian general election. *Contemporary Southeast Asia, 31*(1), pp.88-109.

OKTAY., J.S., 2012. *Grounded theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

ONG, A., 1990. Malay Families, Women's Bodies, and the Body Politic in Malaysia. *American Ethnologist, 17*(2), pp.258-276.

ONWUEGBUZIE, A.J., LEECH, N.L., and COLLINS, K.M., 2012. Qualitative Analysis Techniques for the Review of the Literature. *The Qualitative Report*, *17*(28), pp.1-28.

ONWUEGBUZIE, A.J. and FRELS, R.K., 2014. A Framework for Using Discourse Analysis for the Review of the Literature in Counselling Research. *Counselling Outcome Research and Evaluation*, *5*(1), pp.52-63.

OSWELL, D., 2006. *Culture and society: An introduction to cultural studies*. London: Sage Publications.

PASHA, S.H., 1993. Towards a cultural theory of political ideology and mass media in the Muslim world. *Media, Culture, and Society, 15*(1), pp.61-79.

PASUNI, A., 2014. The tussle in Terengganu: Islamisation, shared languages and blurred identities. In Mohamed Osman, M.N. (Ed.), *The 13th Malaysia elections: Issues, trends, and future trajectories* (pp.7-23). Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

PEEK, L., 2005. Becoming Muslim: The development of a religious identity. *Sociology of Religion, 66*(3), pp.215-242.

PELETZ., M.G., 2002. *Islamic modern: Religious courts and cultural politics in Malaysia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Pew Research Journalism Project. 2013. *News use across social media platforms* [online]. Available at: http://www.journalism.org/2013/11/14/news-use-across-social-media-platforms/ [Accessed: 2 December 2014]

PHILLIPS, T., 2005. After 7/7: sleepwalking to segregation', Speech to the Manchester Council for Community Relations on 22 September 2005. [online]. Available at: https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A3=ind0509&L=CRONEM&E=quoted-printable&P=60513&B=------_%3D_NextPart_001_01C5C28A.09501783&T=text%2Fhtml;%20charset=iso-8859-1&pending= [Accessed: 20 July 2016]

PICKERING, W.S.F., 2011. *Durkheim on Religion: A selection of readings with bibliographies and introductory remarks*. Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co Ltd.

PIDGEON, N., and HENWOOD, K., 1997. Using grounded theory in psychological research. In N. Hayes (Ed.), *Doing Qualitative Analysis in Psychology* (pp.245-274). Hove: Psychology Press Ltd.

PUCHAN, H., 2006. An intellectual history of German public relations. In J. L'Etang, & M. Pieczka (Eds.), *Public relations: Critical debates and contemporary practice* (pp.111–122). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

PUNCH, S., 1998. *Negotiating independence: children and young people growing up in rural Bolivia*. Ph.D. thesis, The University of Leeds.

RADUE, M., 2012. The Internet´s role in the Bersih movement in Malaysia: A case study. *International Review of Information Ethics, 18*(12), pp.60-70.

RAJ, P.P.E., 2014. Marxist influences on cultural studies. *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies*, *1*(3), pp.89-93.

RAJARATNAM, U.D., 2009. Role of Traditional and Online Media in the 12th General Election, Malaysia. *The Journal of the South East Asia Research Centre for Communications and Humanities*, *1*(1), pp.33-58.

RAMANATHAN, S., 2009. *Issues Impacting Upon Media Freedom in Malaysia: A Position Paper*. [online] A paper presented at the National Roundtable Consultation on SUHAKAM's 2009 Annual Report organized by ERA Consumer Malaysia, Penang, September 26.

RAMASAMY, P., 2004. Civil Society in Malaysia: An arena of contestations?. In H.G. Lee, (Ed.), *Civil Society in Southeast Asia* (pp.198-216). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

REECE, D., 1996. Covering and communication: The symbolism of dress among Muslim women. *Howard Journal of Communications*, *7*(1), pp.35-52.

REID, A., 2001. Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a source of diverse modern identities. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 32*(3), pp.295-313.

REITER, S., STEWART, G. and BRUCE, C.S., 2011. A strategy for delayed research method selection: Deciding between grounded theory and phenomenology. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, *9*(1), pp.35-46.

RITCHIE, J., and LEWIS, J., 2003. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

ROER-STRIER, D., and SANDS, R. G., 2015. Moving beyond the 'official story': when 'others' meet in a qualitative interview. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(2), pp.251-268.

ROFF, W.R., 1985. Islam Obscured? Some reflections on studies of Islam & society in Southeast Asia. *Archipel*, *29*(1), pp.7-34.

ROSE, K., 1994. Unstructured and semi-structured interviewing. *Nurse Researcher,1*(3), pp.23-32.

ROSLINA, ABDUL LATIF., WAN AMIZAH, WAN MAHMUD., and ALI, SALMAN., 2013. A Broadcasting History of Malaysia: Progress and Shifts. *Asian Social Science, 9*(6), pp.50-57.

RUBY, T.F., 2006. Listening to the voices of *hijab*. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *29*(1), pp.54-66.

RUDIGER, A., and SPENCER, S., 2003. *The economic and social aspects of migration*. [online] A paper presented at The European Commission and the OECD, Brussels, January 21-22.

RUHAIZAH, ABDUL GHANI., and JAFFARY, AWANG., 2014. *Resolving conflicting issues in a pluralistic society: Tolerance or respect*. [online]. A paper presented at the International Academic Conferences International Institute of Social and Economic Sciences, Istanbul. April 13.

RUSNADEWI, ABDUL RASHID., SITI ASISHAH, HASSAN., and NOOR INAYAH, YAAKUB., 2013. *A need for legal framework of gift inter vivos (hibah) in Malaysian estate planning*. [online]. A Conference Proceeding-Kuala Lumpur International Business, Economics and Law Conference, April.

RUSNAK, T., 2012. Islam, nationalism, and nation-building in Malaysia and Indonesia: Top-down or bottom-up. *McGill International Review, 2*(2), p.16-22.

SALAZAR, L.C., 2007. *Getting a dial tone: Telecommunications liberalisation in Malaysia and the Philippines*. Singapore: ISEAS.

SALDANA, J., 2009. *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage Publication.

SALIHA, HASSAN., 2003. Islamic non-governmental organisations. In M.L. Weiss, and H. Saliha (Eds.), *Social Movements in Malaysia: From Moral Communities to NGOs,* (pp.97-114). USA/Canada: Routledge.

SALLEH, YAAPAR., 2005. Negotiating identity in Malaysia: Multi-cultural society, Islam, theatre and tourism. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, *33*(3), pp.473-485

SAODAH, ABDUL RAHMAN., and ABU SADAT, NURULLAH., 2012. Islamic awakening and its role in Islamic solidarity in Malaysia. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, *29*(1), pp.98-125.

SBARAINI, A., CARTER, S.M., EVANS, R.W., and BLINKHORN, A., 2011. How to do a grounded theory study: a worked example of a study of dental practices. *BMC medical research methodology*, *11*(128), pp.1-10.

SCHIRMER, W., WEIDENSTEDT, L., and REICH, W., 2012. From tolerance to respect in inter-ethnic contexts. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, *38*(7), pp.1049-1065.

SELVARATNAM, V., 1988. Ethnicity, Inequality, and Higher Education in Malaysia. *Comparative Education Review, 32*(2), pp.173-196.

SHAMSUL, A.B., 1996. Debating about identity in Malaysia: A discourse analysis. *Southeast Asian Studies*, *34*(3), pp.566-600.

SHAMSUL, A.B., 2001. Malay and Malayness in Malaysia reconsidered: A critical review. *Communal/Plural*, *9*(1), pp. 69-80.

SHAMSUL, A.B., 2005a. Making sense of the plural-religious past and the modern-secular present of the Islamic Malay world and Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, *33*(3), pp.449-472.

SHAMSUL, A.B., 2005b. Islam embedded: Religion and plurality in Southeast Asia as a mirror for Europe. *Asia Europe Journal*, *3*(2), pp.159-178.

SHAMSUL, A.B., 2010. Pluralism and Islam in Southeast Asia: A critical commentary. [online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/3387989/Pluralism_and_Islam_in_Southeast_Asia_A_critical_Commentary [Accessed: 20 November 2014]

SHENTON, A.K., 2004. Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information*, *22*(2), pp.63-75.

SHRIVER, R., 2003. *Malaysian media: ownership, control and political content*. [online]. Available at: http://rickshriver.net/textfiles/Malaysian%20Media%20Paper%20-%20CARFAX2.pdf [Accessed: 10 October 2013].

SHUHIRDY, MAT NOOR., NURUL AISYAH, ZAKARIA., NIK MOHD, SHAHRIL., HAMIZAD, ABD HADI., and MOHD SALEHUDDIN, MOHD ZAHARI., 2013. Pulut Kuning in Malay society: The beliefs and practices then and now. *Asian Social Science*, *9*(7), p.29-40.

SILVERMAN, D., 2000. *Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook*. United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

SITI ASISHAH, HASSAN., and RUSNADEWI, ABDUL RASHID., 2014. The Legal Rights and Duties of Administrators and Executors of Deceased Muslims' Property in Malaysia. *The Social Sciences*, *9*(2), pp.98-101.

SITI SURIANI, OTHMAN., 2012. *We just write what we think is newsy: An analysis on newsworthiness constructions in Malaysian newspapers*. Ph.D. thesis, Nottingham Trent University.

SMELTZER, S., and PARÉ, D.J., 2015. Challenging electoral authoritarianism in Malaysia: the embodied politics of the Bersih movement. *Interface: A Journal on Social Movements*, *7*(2), pp.120-144.

SMELTZER, S.C., 2008a. Biotechnology, the environment, and alternative media in Malaysia. *Canadian Journal of Communication, 33,* pp.5-20.

SMELTZER, S.C., 2008b. Blogging in Malaysia. *Journal of International Communication, 14*(1), pp.28-45.

SMITH, J.K., 1983. Quantitative versus qualitative research: An attempt to clarify the issue. *Educational researcher*, *12*(3), pp.6-13.

SMITH, A.D., 1989. The origins of nations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 12*(3), pp.340-367.

SMITH, J.A., 2008. *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.

SMITH, J.M., 2010. Becoming an atheist in America: Constructing identity and meaning from the rejection of theism. *Sociology of Religion*, *72*, pp. 215-237.

SNODGRASS, D.R., 1995. Successful economic development in a multi-ethnic society: The Malaysian case [online] Available at: http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/sitefiles/file/about/director/pubs/503.pdf [Accessed: 2 April 2013]

SOFIAH, SAMSUDIN., and MD SIRAJUL, ISLAM., 2015. Value of *Al-Amanah* in Human Life. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, *5*(4), pp.1-3.

SOON, L.B., AZIRAH, HASHIM., and BUTTNY, R., 2014. Accounts of religio-cultural identity in Singapore and Malaysia. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 229*, pp.9-28.

SOROUSH, A., 2002. *The Responsibilities of the Muslim Intellectual in the 21st Century*. [online], Available at: https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?q=Farish+Noor%2C+New+Voices+of+Islam%2C+2002%2C+15-16&btnG=&hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5 [Accessed: 10 March, 2016].

SRISKANDARAJAH, D., 2005. Development, inequality and ethnic accommodation: Clues from Malaysia, Mauritius and Trinidad and Tobago. *Oxford Development Studies*, *33*(1), pp.63-79.

STARK, J., 2006. Indian Muslims in Malaysia: images of shifting identities in the multi-ethnic state. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 26*(3), pp.383-398.

STARKS, H. and TRINIDAD, S.B., 2007. Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, *17*(10), pp.1372-1380.

STEELE, J., 2009. Professionalism Online: How Malaysiakini Challenges Authoritarianism. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 14*(1), pp.91-111.

STIVENS, M., 2006. Family values and Islamic revival: Gender, rights and state moral projects in Malaysia. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *29*(4), pp.354-367

STIVENS, M., 2010. Religion, nation and mother-love: The Malay Peninsula past and present. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *33*(4), pp.390-401.

STOREY, J., 2010. *Culture and power in cultural studies: The politics of signification*. Great Britain: Edinburgh University Press.

SUARAM, 2005. Freedom of expression and the media in Malaysia. Petaling Jaya: SUARAM Komunikasi.

SUBRAMANIAM, S., 2011. Assessing political dynamics in contemporary Malaysia: Implications for democratic change. *ASIANetwork Exchange, 19*(1), pp.42-52.

SUDDABY, R., 2006. From the editors: What grounded theory is not. *Academy of Management Journal*, *49*(4), pp.633-642.

SYED ARABI, IDID., 1988. *The press system in Malaysia: some exploratory ideas of its role within a functional context*. In Consultation on Press Systems in ASEAN

Conference: Jakarta, 23- 26 August, 1988. Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre.

TAGHIPOUR, A., 2014. Adopting constructivist versus objectivist grounded theory in health care research: A review of the evidence. *Journal of Midwifery and Reproductive Health*, *2*(2), pp.100-104.

TAMIR, MOUSTAFA., 2013. Liberal rights versus Islamic law? The construction of a binary in Malaysian politics. *Law & Society Review*, *47*(4), pp.771-802.

TAN, L.E., 2000. Chinese schools in Malaysia: a case of cultural resilience. In K.H., Lee and C.B., Tan (Eds.), *The Chinese in Malaysia* (pp.228-254). Shah Alam: Oxford University Press.

TURNBULL, C.M., 1980. *A short history of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei*. Singapore: Cassell Australia Ltd.

TURNER, G., 2003. *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction*. London: Unwin Hyman.

UFEN, A., 2009. Mobilising political Islam: Indonesia and Malaysia Compared. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics, 47*(3), pp.308–333.

UMAR FARUQ, ABD-ALLAH., 2004. Islam and the cultural imperative, *Nawawi Foundation*, pp.1-14.

URQUHART, C., LEHMANN, H., and MYERS, M.D., 2010. Putting the 'theory' back into grounded theory: guidelines for grounded theory studies in information systems. *Information Systems Journal, 20*, pp.357-381.

VAN QUAQUEBEKE, N., HENRICH, D.C., and ECKLOFF, T., 2007. It is not tolerance I'm asking for, its respect: A conceptual framework to differentiate between tolerance, acceptance and two types of respect. *Gruppendynamik Und Organisationsberatung. 38*(2), pp.185-200.

VILLANUEVA, V.J., 1993. *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Colour*. America: National Council of Teachers of English.

VALENZUELA, S., 2013. Unpacking the use of social media for protest behaviour: the roles of information, opinion expression, and activism. *American Behavioural Scientist, 57*(7), pp.920-942.

WAGNER, W., SEN, R., PERMANADELI, R., and HOWARTH, C.R., 2012. The veil and Muslim women's identity: Cultural pressures and resistance to stereotyping. *Culture & Psychology, 18*(4), pp.521-541.

WALKER, D., and MYRICK, F., 2006. Grounded theory: An exploration of process and procedure. *Qualitative Health Research, 16*(4), pp.547–559.

WANG, LAY KIM. 1998. Malaysia: Ownership as control. Development Dialogue. *The Journal of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2*, pp.61-84.

WANG, LAY KIM., 2001. Media and democracy in Malaysia. *The Public*, *8*(2), pp.67-88.

WILLFORD, A.C., 2007. *Cage of freedom: Tamil identity and the ethnic fetish in Malaysia*. Singapore: NUS Press.

WEBB, C., 1992. The use of the first person in academic writing: objectivity, language and gatekeeping. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 17,* pp.747-752.

WEISS, M.L., 2004. The changing shape of Islamic politics in Malaysia. *Journal of East Asian Studies, 4*, pp.139-173.

WEISS, M.L., 2008. Malaysia's 12th general election: Causes and consequences of the opposition's surge. *Asia Pacific Bulletin, 12*, pp.1-2.

WELSH, B., 2013. Malaysia's Elections: A Step Backward. *Journal of Democracy*, *24*(4), pp.136-150.

WELSH, E., 2002. Dealing with Data: Using NVivo in the Qualitative Data Analysis Process. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 3*(2), pp.1-7.

WHITING, A.J., 2010. Secularism, the Islamic state and the Malaysian Legal Profession. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law, 5*(1), pp.1-36.

WILLIAMS, D.M., 2012. *Learning to manage: A substantive grounded theory of large bodied women's interactions with medical professionals.* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Tasmania.

WILLIG, C., 2013. *Introducing qualitative research in psychology*. 3rd ed. New York, USA: Open University Press.

WILMOT, A., 2005. *Designing sampling strategies for qualitative social research: with particular reference to the Office for National Statistics' Qualitative Respondent Register*. [online]. Available at: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/general-methodology/data-collection-methodology/reports-and-publications/designing-sampling-strategies-.pdf [Accessed: 5 April 2014)

WILSON, W., 2012. Constructive grounded theory in the search for meaning on global mindedness: A novice researcher's guide. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 6*, pp.1-14.

WOODWARD, K., 2004. *Questioning identity: Gender, class, ethnicity*. 2nd ed. London and New York: The Open University.

WUTHNOW, R., 2008. Prayer, cognition, and culture. *Poetics*, *36*(5), pp.333-337.

YOUSIF, A., 2004. Islamic revivalism in Malaysia: An Islamic response to non-Muslim concerns. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, *21*(4), pp.30-56.

YUSUF, AL-QARADAWI, 1992. *The lawful and the prohibited in Islam*. Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust.

ZAHAROM, NAIN., and MUSTAFA K. ANUAR., 1998. *Ownership and control of the Malaysian Media* [online]. Available at: http://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/kasarinlan/article/download/448/413 [Accessed: 10 March 2013].

ZAINAH, A., 2001. What Islam, whose Islam? Sisters in Islam and the struggle for women's rights. In R.F., Hefner (Ed.), *The politics of multiculturalism: Pluralism and citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia*, (pp.227-254). USA: University of Hawaii Press.

ZAWAWI, I., 2004. Globalization and national identity: Managing ethnicity and cultural pluralism in Malaysia. In S. Yoichiro, (Ed.), *Growth and governance in Asia* (pp.115-136). Honolulu: Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies.

ZEMBYLAS, M., 2010. Racialisation/ethnicisation of school emotional spaces: The politics of resentment. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(2), pp.253-270.

ZINE, J., 2008. *Canadian Islamic schools: Unravelling the politics of faith, gender, knowledge, and identity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

ZUBAIR, HASAN., 1988. *Distributional equity in Islam*. [online]. Available at: https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/2785/ [Accessed: 4 December 2015]

Chapter 2 – Setting the Context

[1] Demographics of a Diverse Malaysia, accessible at:
http://penangmonthly.com/demographics-of-a-diverse-malaysia/

[2] Malaysia Economic Situation, accessible at: http://asean.fta.govt.nz/malaysia-economic-situation/

[3] Malaysia overview, accessible at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malaysia/overview

[4] Malaysia's ruling coalition retained its 56-year hold on power, the country's Election Commission said early Monday, but a bitter opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim refused to concede defeat, accessible at:
http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/malaysian-election-results-trickling-in/664138.html

[5] Ibid

[6] 13th Malaysian General Election Result, accessible at:
http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/ge13/13th-malaysian-general-election-result.html

[7] Malaysia's ruling coalition retained its 56-year hold on power, the country's Election Commission said early Monday, but a bitter opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim refused to concede defeat, accessible at:
http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/malaysian-election-results-trickling-in/664138.html

[8] Sunni and Shiah refer to two main sects in Islam. Sunni constituted the majority of Muslims which is divided into four smaller schools of thought: Shafi'e, Hanbali, Hanafi, and Maliki. Meanwhile, Shiah followed by smaller number of Muslims. Malaysian Muslims follow Sunni school of thought which is based on Shafie teachings. For further information about the differences between Sunni and Shiah can be referred to Farid (2012).

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

[1] A critical study of Islamic religio-political movements in Malaysia. [online], Available at:
http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/10603/52392/12/12_chapter%204.pdf

[2] Malaya is used to refer to the pre-independent and early post-independent before the announcement of the nation name as Malaysia.

[3] Malaysia. [online]. Available at: http://www.pressreference.com/Ky-Ma/Malaysia.html [Accessed: 10 April 2013]

[4] Ibid.

[5] Antonio Gramsci and the idea of hegemony. [online]. Available at: http://www-personal.umich.edu/~hfox/gramsci.html [Accessed: 10 April 2016]

Chapter 6 – Islam in the Malaysian Political System

[1] http://www.yale.edu/yup/pdf/cim6.pdf

[2] Mahathirism refers to the era which Mahathir Mohammad was the Prime Minister. During his time, Malaysia had undergone serious Islamisation processes.

[3] Sultan in the title given to a ruler in each state of Malaysia to indicate its almost full sovereignty. Out of 13 states, Malaysia only has nine Sultans.

[4] http://www.ikim.gov.my/index.php/ms/buletin/8219-pendengar-ikim-fm-terus-meningkat

[5] http://www.islamicevents.my/organisation/126

[6] http://www.ilham-fkp.com/uploads/4/1/5/6/415626/keynote2_dr_mahazan_ilham.pdf

Chapter 8 – Contesting Features on Malay-Islam's Preferential Status and Policies

[1] http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/azalina-three-ministers-met-ag-for-solution-in-indira-gandhis-custody-tussl

[2] https://tavaana.org/sites/default/files/anwar_-_pdf_-_english.pdf

[3] https://tavaana.org/sites/default/files/anwar_-_pdf_-_english.pdf

APPENDIX 1

PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

Title of Project: Islamic cultures in Malaysia: A Case Study of Malaysian and Transnational Travel Journalism

Dear Participant

Invitation to Participate in a Group Interview

With reference to the above, I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project titled "Islamic cultures in Malaysia: A Case Study of Malaysian and Transnational Travel Journalism". This research is conducted as part of my Ph.D. programme.

For your information, this research would like to access your understanding on a dominant construction of Islamic cultures in relation to a national identity in Malaysia. The objective of this interview is to explore the history, unique characters, and the position of Islam in Malaysia in relation to or as opposed to other cultures and religions in the country.

I wish to get your consent to participate in this research. If you would like to partake please complete the enclosed consent form, and return it to this email. If you do not want to partake you do not have to do anything further. To help you make this decision I have enclosed an information sheet. Please take the time reading the information carefully.

I believe that your kind cooperation will extend a significant contribution to the field of knowledge and practice of communication, media, and cultural studies.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. I may be contacted via wan_norshira@yahoo.com or +6019-9243423 (wassap) or +44 07784 331888 (UK line).

Your participation is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Wan Norshira Binti Wan Mohd Ghazali
Ph.D. Research Student,
Communication, Media, and Cultural Studies,
School of Arts and Humanities,
Nottingham Trent University

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Project: Islamic cultures in Malaysia: A Case Study of Malaysian and Transnational Travel Journalism

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time reading the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

If you choose to take part you will be given this information sheet and a copy of your signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of this study?

We would like to gain access to your understanding of the position of Islam and Islamic cultures in relation to other cultures and religions in Malaysia. In order to do this, we would like to find out how and what triggers the institutionalisation of Islam is the country and how the Islamic cultures influence or affect your life and work practices.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You will not be held any responsibility if you decide to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be invited to come to a place which will be determined at a later time and will be decided based on your consent. We will choose a public venue for participant's safety and convenience. The interview will last approximately one hour and will be audio-taped.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

This information will enable us to get a better understanding of your view regarding the issue of religions and ethnicities in Malaysia.

Will my participation in this study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. For focus group research participants, it is highly reminded to keep confidential all information discussed during a group discussion in an effort to encourage everybody to respect each other's anonymity.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The findings will be written up as a thesis report and submitted for publication. If you refuse to be identified in any report or publication, your name will be removed and we will use the pseudo name in identifying your views.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is part of my Ph.D. research project which is funded by the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia.

Contact for further information

Wan Norshira Wan Mohd Ghazali
PhD Research Student,
Communication, Media, and Cultural Studies,
School of Arts and Humanities,
Nottingham Trent University.
Tel: +44 07784 331888
wan_norshira@yahoo.com

Should you choose to take part in this study you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form for your keeping.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of project: Islamic cultures in Malaysia: A Case Study of Malaysian and Transnational Travel Journalism

Site: Will be informed later (e.g. participant's office, public places, a library's room)

Investigator: Wan Norshira Binti Wan Mohd Ghazali

You should complete this form yourself.

Please cross out as necessary

- Have you read & understood the participant information sheet **YES/NO**
- Have you had an opportunity to ask questions & discuss the study **YES/NO**
- Have you received enough information about the study **YES/NO**
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason which will not affect you in any circumstances whatsoever **YES/NO**
- Do you agree to take part in the study **YES/NO**
- Do you understand that this study has nothing to do with any organisation nor serve an interest of any party **YES/NO**

Signature (Participant)
Date
Name (In block capitals)

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has indicated his/her willingness to take part.

Signature (Investigator)
Date
Name: WAN NORSHIRA BINTI WAN MOHD GHAZALI

Sample of Interview Protocol
Interview Protocol Project: The Influence of Islamic Cultures in Malaysia
Date and Time of the Interview:
Place:
Interviewee:

Brief description of the project:

The research would like to access your understanding on a dominant construction of Islamic cultures in Malaysia; to explore the history, unique characters, and the position of Islam in Malaysia in relation to or as opposed to other cultures and religions in the country. This study is important because the issue of religion and ethnicities have always been the limelight in the media and is a general public's concern.

General questions:

1) What is your opinion about Malaysia as an Islamic country?
2) How has the practice of Islam changed or the influence of Islam changed over the last few years in Malaysia?
3) How do you see the relationship of Islam and Malay in the construction of identity? What functions does Islam fulfil in the cultural practices of Malaysia?
4) How do you see the nature of a relationship between Islam and politics in Malaysia?
5) What do you think about the position of other ethnic minorities in Malaysia?
6) How do you view the issue of special privilege/rights in Malaysia?

Specific questions to government authority or media practitioner:

7) Malaysia claims to be an Islamic country, how does this shape the operation structure of your organisation and the flow of your work?
8) How do you see the responsibility of the government sector towards the public affairs especially to each racial group?
9) How do you see your relationship with the government and your responsibility and roles as a watchdog to the public? How does this affect your work?
10) How do you see your responsibility as a journalist when dealing with racial differences? Or how do you treat your news when it comes to the issue of ethnicity?

(Thank the individual for participating in the interview. Assure him/her of confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews)

March 5, 2014

Federal Court reserves decision on 'Allah'

By: Anisah Shukry

The Federal Court has reserved its decision, whether to grant leave to the Catholic weekly publication, the Herald, to use the word 'Allah' to refer to God.

PUTRAJAYA: The Federal Court today reserved its decision to a date to be fixed later on whether or not to grant leave to the Catholic Church to appeal against the Court of Appeal's decision which prohibited its weekly publication, the Herald from using the word Allah in its Bahasa Malaysia version.

The Federal Court made the ruling after seven senior judges heard arguments for and against the Court of Appeal judgment which had barred the Catholic weekly publication from using the term 'Allah' to refer to God.

The panel judges were lead by Chief Justice Ariffin Zakaria.

The other six judges were Court of Appeal president Raus Sharif, Chief Judge of Malaya Zulkefli Ahmad Makinudin, Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak Richard Malanjum and Federal Court judges Suriyadi Halim Omar, Zainun Ali and Jeffrey Tan.

The panel had earlier heard submissions from lawyers representing the church, six state Islamic religious councils and the Malaysian Chinese Muslims Association (Macma) as well as submissions from a senior federal counsel representing the Home Ministry.

The six states are Terengganu, Kedah, Johor, Malacca, the Federal Territories, and Selangor.

Earlier a group of supporters from different agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) who are Muslims performed solat hajat in front of the Palace of Justice square.

The members, clad in red or black, arrived by the bus loads earlier this morning to protest against the Church's bid to overturn the Appellate Court's decision.

They began shouting "Allahu akbar" (God is great) while waiting for the verdict and ran in droves towards the building's exit, where they were blocked by the police, who formed a human barricade.

"Let us show them that we Malays are not weak! We have been patient and tolerant for far too long," the protesters shouted.

They tried to negotiate with the policemen on duty to allow them into the court room which turned out to be fruitless. They eventually gave in and dispersed.

A few of these protesters however said the scene would have turned ugly if the policemen were not Malays.

Others vented their frustration by hurling items at the Federal Court building, although they were stoped by fellow protesters who reminded them not to harm government property.

Perkasa president Ibrahim Ali who was with the protesters said if the Federal Court verdict was not in favour of the Muslims, then it would jeopardise the nation as Malays were the majority.

"Even minus the non-Muslim Bumiputeras, Malays are still the majority. We inherited this land when it was still called 'Tanah Melayu' (Malaya)… All the rulers, the royals are Malay Muslims," Ibrahim told reporters.

"We respect any decision made by the court, but still I am worried what could happen to the country," he said.

Ibrahim added that should the Federal Court allow the appeal to proceed, the Malay NGOs would come here each day to support the "Malay cause."

In October last year, the Court of Appeal banned the Herald from using the word 'Allah' to refer to God in the Bahasa Malaysia section of its weekly newspaper.

A three-man bench chaired by Mohamed Apandi Ali delivered the decision then, ruling that the government's appeal was allowed.

The church filed an appeal against this ruling and the Federal Court heard arguments on the leave application today.

On Dec 31, 2009, the High Court allowed the church's judicial review application and lifted the Home Minister's ban on the use of the word in the Herald.

Judge Lau Bee Lan had said then that the church had a constitutional right to use the word Allah in its newspaper on the grounds that religions other than Islam can be practiced in peace and harmony.

Available at: http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2014/03/05/federal-court-reserves-decision-on-allah/

Body of Muslim convert taken away during Chinese funeral ceremony

By: Looi Sue-Chern

Published: 9 June 2014 | Updated: 9 June 2014 2:42 PM

Penang Islamic Religious Department officers carry the casket of Teoh Cheng Cheng (her Muslim name was Nora Teoh Abdullah) into the department's hearse at Macallum Street in George Town, Penang today. – The Malaysian Insider/Hasnoor Hussain pic, June 9, 2014.

The Penang Islamic Department (Jaipp) today caused a stir at a Chinese funeral when they took away the body said to be that of a Muslim convert.

Jaipp officers arrived at Lebuh Macallum, where the funeral was held at about 1.20pm, some 20 minutes after the police reached the scene first to inform the deceased's family to stop the funeral procession.

After negotiating with the family, Jaipp officers took the body away at about 3.50pm in a van, and sent it to the mortuary pending further investigation.

The incident shocked and upset the deceased's family members, who were not aware that waitress, Teoh Cheng Cheng, 38, had become a Muslim.
The Star Online reported that Teoh had converted some 17 years ago and had a Muslim boyfriend. Her Muslim name was Nora Teoh Abdullah.

Her mother Tan Ma Suan, 64, questioned why the department waited so long to take action if her daughter was in fact a Muslim.

She asked why the department had to come on the day of the funeral, adding that the family will consider taking legal action against the department.

Teoh died last Saturday after she fell to her death at an apartment.

State religious exco Datuk Abdul Malik Abdul Kassim said the matter has been resolved amicably.

"Proof showing that the deceased was a Muslim was presented to the family and they have accepted it.

"They allowed the department to take the body for burial according to Muslim rites. Everything has been amicably settled," he told The Malaysian Insider.

This is the second incident this month of an Islamic authority interrupting the rites practised by another religion.

Last week, the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (Jais) interrupted a Hindu wedding at a temple in Petaling Jaya after receiving reports that the bride was a Muslim.

Her MyKad was then found to indicate that she is a Muslim and Jais officers took her away for questioning.

Jais's raid on the Hindu temple was condemned by Malaysia Hindu Sangam, Bar Council, Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) and even former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. – June 9, 2014.

Available at: http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/body-of-muslim-convert-taken-away-during-chinese-funeral-ceremony#sthash.kRkOURXW.dpuf

APPENDIX 6

a) An interview transcript from NVivo. The left side contains the list of individual interviews, while the right side displays a transcript under analysis.
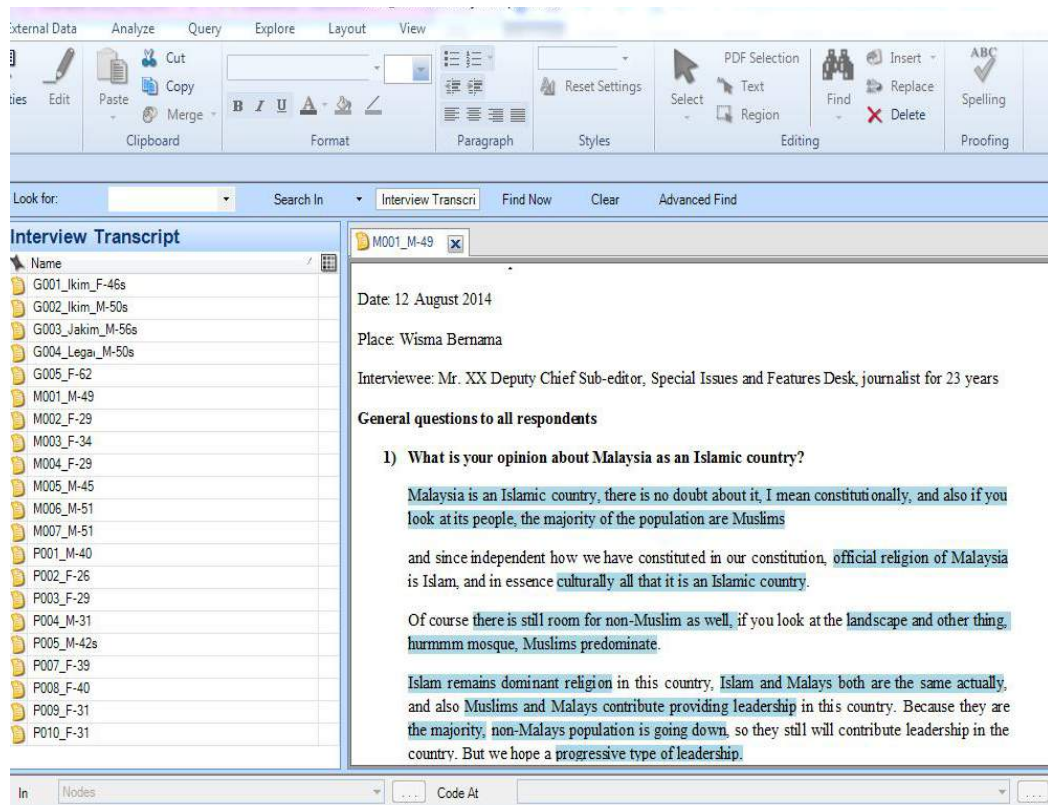
b) An example of nodes and excerpts. As selected, the excerpts coded under a node called 'imposing and forcing on non-Muslim' is displayed in the right pane.
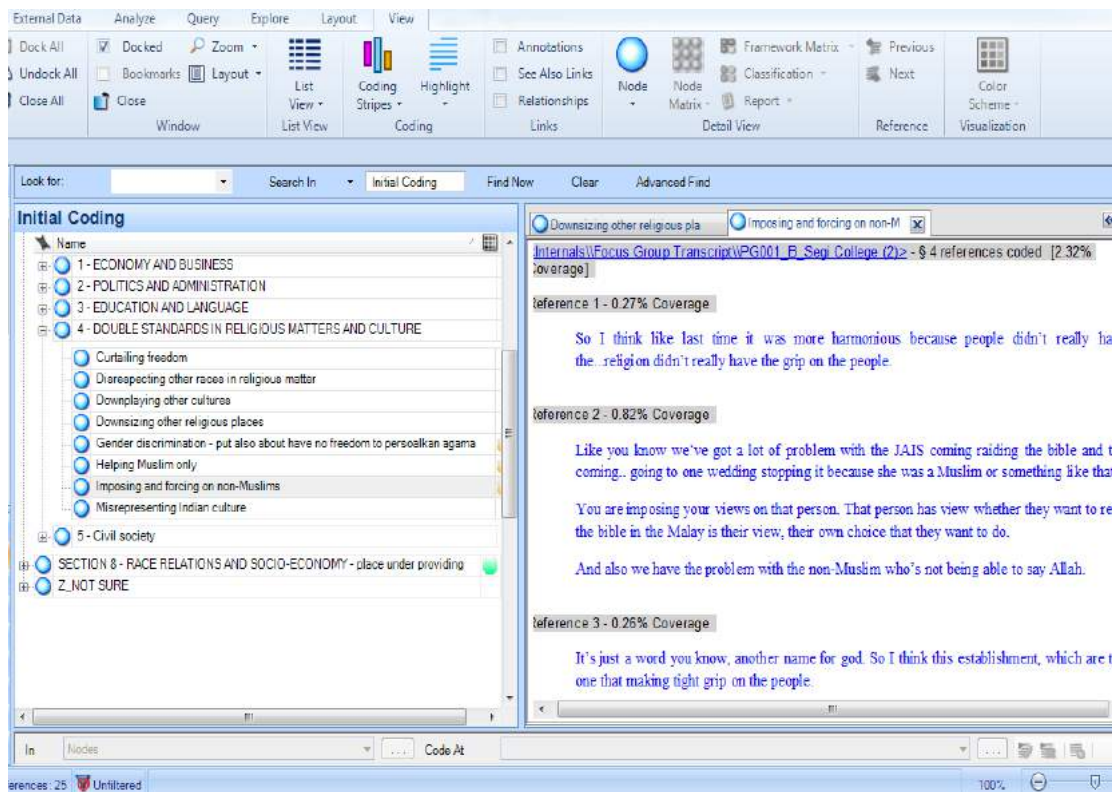
c) Initial coding – Initial coding process has generated a total of 1112 initial codes. All individual interviews and focus group discussions were merged before moving to focused coding.
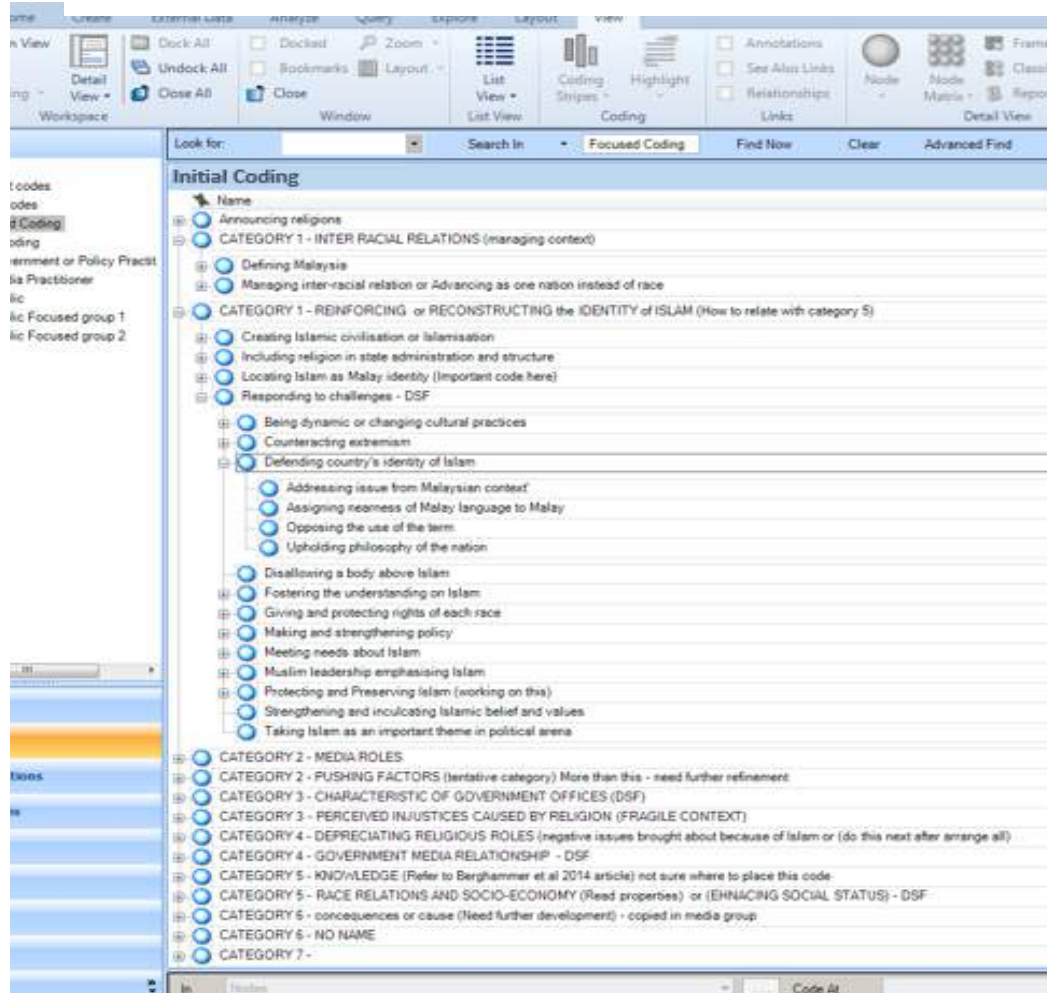
d) Focused coding on the 'Ethnic Contestation' category which contains five sub-categories – economic and business, politics and administration, education and language, religious issues, cultural matters, and civil society – as reported in Chapter 8. It should be noted, some of the names of the codes and categories have been revised in Chapter 8 to better represent their coded items.
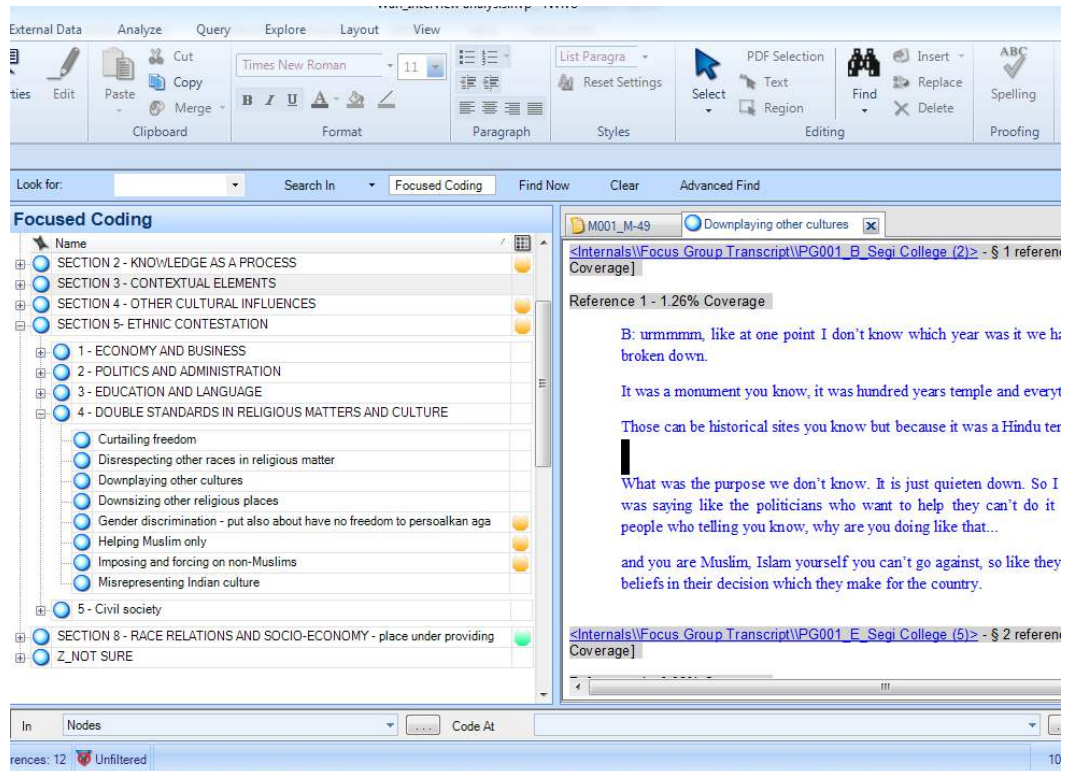
e) Memo on nodes coded. Please note how the memo facilitates the analytical process of coding. In the memo, several initial codes have been noted to contribute towards 'pushing for a greater role of Islam' (a higher level code). This code was explored further when analysing other transcripts. The memo is taken from a government authority respondent.