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**ISLAMIC SCHOOLS AND MUSLIM WOMEN IDENTITY: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MUSLIM GIRLS' SCHOOLS IN
KEDAH, MALAYSIA AND LEEDS, UNITED KINGDOM**



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Abstrak

Pendidikan Islam sangat penting untuk membentuk identiti beragama dalam setiap individu Muslim. Dalam hal ini, sekolah aliran Islam berperanan sebagai agen dalam membentuk dan memperkukuhkan identiti wanita Muslim yang digambarkan sebagai terpinggir, pasif, lemah dan tidak berpendidikan oleh masyarakat Barat. Pembentukan identiti wanita Muslim yang ideal dipengaruhi oleh peranan guru sebagai *role model*, subjek Pendidikan Islam, etos, budaya dan persekitaran sosial sesebuah masyarakat. Dalam erti kata lain, matlamat institusi pendidikan adalah sama dalam membentuk kepercayaan, amalan dan nilai kepada wanita Muslim. Namun, konsep, pendekatan dan mekanisme yang digunakan adalah berbeza merentasi sempadan budaya dan geografi. Justeru, kajian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti bagaimana sekolah aliran Islam membentuk identiti wanita Muslim dalam kalangan pelajar. Kutipan data empirikal dijalankan di dua lokasi iaitu Maktab Mahmud (MM), Alor Setar, Malaysia dan New Horizon Community School (NHCS), Leeds, United Kingdom. Kajian ini juga menganalisis secara perbandingan pendekatan yang digunakan oleh kedua institusi tersebut yang berlainan masyarakat, budaya dan negara dalam usaha membentuk identiti wanita Muslim. Data diperolehi melalui kaedah pemerhatian, *focus group* dan temu bual. Seramai 68 orang responden terlibat dalam kajian ini. Setiap sekolah diwakili oleh pengetua, seorang wakil daripada pihak pengurusan, dua orang guru subjek Pendidikan Islam dan 30 orang pelajar. Hasil kajian mendapati, majoriti responden bersetuju bahawa sistem sekolah aliran Islam telah mempengaruhi pembentukan identiti mereka. Selain itu, dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan perbezaan budaya, polisi dan dasar negara mempengaruhi sistem persekolahan di Malaysia dan United Kingdom. Kajian ini merumuskan bahawa pembentukan identiti wanita Muslim ideal merupakan satu proses berterusan yang sangat berkait rapat dengan etos, budaya dan persekitaran sosial sesebuah masyarakat. Pada masa yang sama, proses penggubalan sesebuah kurikulum, konsep dan pelaksanaan pendidikan seharusnya mengambilkira latar belakang budaya dan masyarakat yang ingin dibentuk.

Kata Kunci: Sekolah aliran agama, Identiti wanita Muslim, Etos dan persekitaran, Subjek Pendidikan Islam dan *Role model*

Abstract

Islamic Education is important in instilling religious identity for every Muslim. In this case, Islamic schools play the role of moulding and strengthening Muslim women's identity which has been wrongly interpreted as being marginalised, passive, weak, and uneducated by the western society. The formation of ideal Muslim women's identity is influenced by teachers as role models, Religious Education subject, ethos, culture, and social environments of a society. In other words, the goal of educational institutions is the same which is to form faith, good practice, and values among Muslim women. However, the concept, approach, and mechanism used to achieve this goal differ according to cultural and geographical boundaries. Therefore, this qualitative research is aimed at identifying how Islamic schools form Muslim women's identity among school students. Empirical data collection was done at two locations, namely the Maktab Mahmud (MM), Alor Setar, Malaysia and New Horizon Community School (NHCS), Leeds, United Kingdom. This research also compared the approaches used by both schools -which differ in society, culture, and country – in moulding the identity of Muslim women. Data were collected through observations, focus group, and interviews. 68 respondents took part in this research. Every school was represented by its principal, one representative of the administrators, two Religious Education teachers, and 30 students. The findings of this research showed that majority of the respondents agreed that Islamic school system influenced how their identities were formed. In addition, the findings indicated that differences in culture, policy, and the fundamental elements of nations influence the school systems in Malaysia and the United Kingdom. In addition, this research found that the formation of Muslim women's identity is a continuous process which is closely related to ethos, culture, and the social environments of a society. Therefore, the process of designing a curriculum, the concept and the implementation of educational approaches should take into account the backgrounds of the intended culture and society.

Keywords: Islamic schools, Muslim women identity, Ethos and environment, Religious Education subject and Role model

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Glossary of Words in Arabic (A) and Urdu (U)

Akhirah (A)	The hereafter
Allahu Akbar (A)	Allah is the Greatest
Alhamdulillah (A)	Praise be to God (Allah)
Alim (A)	A religious scholar
Aurah (A)	Certain part of the body that Muslim women need to cover from others to see
Ayah (A)	A verse of the Quran
Ayahs (U)	Nannies or ladies' maids
Azan (A)	Call for prayer
Barakah (A)	Blessing
Biradari (U)	Extended patrilineal kinship group, clan
Bismillah (A)	In the name of God (Allah)
Da'wah (A)	Invitation to Islam, or missionary activity
Deen (A)	Islam
Du'a (A)	Supplicatory Prayer
Dunya	This world
Eid (A)	A Muslim celebration to mark the end of Ramadhan (Eidul Fitr) or Hajj (Eidul Adha)
Fatwa (A)	An authoritative opinion in Islamic law
Fiqh (A)	Islamic Jurisprudence
Hadith (A)	a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad
Hajj (A)	the pilgrimage to Makkah
Halal (A)	that which is legally permissible according to Islamic law
Haram (A)	that which is impermissible according to Islamic law
Hijab (A)	the veil which covers a Muslim woman's hair and upper body
Ifthar (A)	Break fasting
Imam (A)	A prayer leader
Iman (A)	Faith

Insha Allah (A)	God- Willing
Iqra'	Read
Izzat (A)	Honour
Jannah (A)	Paradise
Khutbah (A)	The imam's sermon given at <i>Juma'ah</i> (Friday) prayer
Lascar (U)	Indian seaman
Madrasah (A)	An Islamic seminary
Maharajah (U)	King
Masha Allah (A)	Whatever God (Allah) wills
Quran (A)	Muslim scripture; primary source for Islamic law
Rahmah (A)	Mercy
Ramadhan (A)	the lunar month of Muslim fasting
Salaam (A)	Islamic greeting
Sirah (A)	History of the Prophet Muhammad
Sharam (U)	Without any shame
Shari'ah (A)	Islamic law
Sheikh (A)	Muslim scholars
Sunnah (A)	Custom (of the Prophet); primary source for Islamic law
Tafsir (A)	Exegesis, commentary on the Qur'an
Tajweed (A)	Rules in reciting the Qur'an
Tarbiyyah (A)	Education
Taqwa (A)	Fear to Allah
Ulama' (A)	Religious scholars
Ummah (A)	Community of believers
Wahy (A)	Revelation
Waqf (A)	Endowment

List of Abbreviations

AMS	Association of Muslim School
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
DfES	Department for Education and Skill
EIC	East Indian Company
ICE	Islam and Citizenship Education
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
JHEIK	Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Kedah
KBD	Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini
KBSM	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah
LEPAI	Lembaga Penasihat Pelajaran dan Pendidikan Agama Islam
LMF	Leeds Muslim Forum
MCB	Muslim Council of Britain
NHCS	New Horizon Community School
OCR	Oxford Cambridge RSA examination board
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism project
RE	Religious Education
SABK	Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan
SAN	Sekolah Agama Negeri
SAR	Sekolah Agama Rakyat
SDSA	School Development Support Agency
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
VA	Voluntary Aided

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The role of Islamic schools in the development of Muslim identities is increasingly evident (Ishak, 1995; Tamuri, 2004, 2010; Halstead, 2005; Gilliat-Ray, 2010). To date, Islamic education of one form or another is generally considered essential by Muslims to their religious identity. The need to seek Islamic knowledge is often said to have begun with the first revelation of Islam when the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was instructed to read (*iqra'*) by the Angel Jibril and it finds its modern expression in many institutions today. This research will examine the role of Islamic schools in the formation of Muslim women identities both in Kedah and Leeds. In order to investigate the school setting; ethos and environment, religious education subject and the teachers, in which Muslims find themselves and articulations of their identity, this research examines how they interact with the school setting and how their identity are structured. The study also explores other concepts which may potentially shape their experiences, including ideas of culture, belief and policy within the wider framework of these influencing factors.

This study will also show that identity is also a highly subjective phenomenon. As Gilliat-Ray (2010: xii) argues, the 'self- ascription 'Muslim' can be more or less meaningful at different times in the life of an individual'. Similarly, Knott and Khokher (1993) note, the process of identity formation is not static but ongoing, however, further details may reveal the choice of schools, the environment, the role models and similar options have influenced someone's associations and identities. In

this research context, Vuegellers (2000) argues that the type of school, school culture, teacher personality will influence the development of the students' identity and values. Hence, this research discusses and elaborates this issue based on Veugellers' (2000) argument.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In a traditional Muslim family, particularly within the Malay community in Kedah and Pakistani community in Leeds, there are beliefs that the behaviour of females needs to be controlled in order to preserve male honour (Rippin, 2005; Shaw, 2000) and the participation of Muslim women in educational sphere was contradictory to the status quo (Musa, 2007; Swettenham, 1899). Moreover, within the South Asian's traditional context, education for women has often been seen as detrimental to the family's *izzat*¹ (honour) (Metcalf, 1997; Benn, 1998; Jawad, 2003; Azam, 2006). Although this taboo has not much affected the Malay women community today, the misperception and discrimination had occurred before the independence. This was due to the lack of Islamic educational provision for women (Girl's Islamic schools) in the past, lack of women emergence and aspiration in education (Role Model) and misinterpretation of women's right in Islam. Consequently, Muslim women are identified as passive, uneducated, depressed and docile. Hence, Muslim women both in Kedah and Leeds need to reconstruct a new Muslim women identity to eliminate the stigma, to uphold the Islamic teaching and thus, to engage with the modern contemporary society.

¹¹ *Izzat* means honour and *Sharam* means shame. They are concepts of honour and shame prevalent in the culture of North India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. It applies universally across religions (Hindu, Muslim and Sikh), communities and genders. It means maintaining the reputation of oneself and one's family and not doing anything that will bring shame to one's honour and that of the family. Likewise, part of the concept of *izzat* is the obligation of taking revenge when one's *izzat* or that of the family has been violated.

The issue of Muslim women identity in this research is aroused when many traditionalists argue that women should stay at home and education can harm their *sharam* (without any shame) and *izzat* (honour). Both contexts of Malays and Pakistani communities have produced a great deal of debate, with some reformists asserting that such attitudes are cultural and not part of the *Quran* and *Sunnah* (Rippin, 2005). A Muslim feminist, Roald (2001), suggests that the traditionalists should re-interpret patriarchal Muslim traditions with reference to the authentic Islamic resources – the *Quran* and *Sunnah*- so that the Muslim women can engage with the current modern contemporary society. In fact, Islam considers women's rights to an education to be equally strong to those of men.

For Muslim women in Malaysia and Britain, the shift in identity is most visible among the new generation. Many are increasingly challenging traditional attitudes and customs; moulding new identities that encompass some traditional values, whilst integrating them with new ones; and adopting cultural values that suit their needs (Werbner, 2002). Within Pakistani's cultural boundaries, women are often less trapped by concepts of *sharam*, *izzat* and *biradari* (extended patrilineal kinship group, clan) (Shaw, 2000; Lewis, 2007; Gilliat-Ray, 2010). They have become more open and keen to actively participate in society, education, politics and the economy (Werbner, 2002).

The current provision of Islamic education for Muslim women is very different now from that of which the first generation of Muslim migrants to Britain and the Malay ancestors received. As changes have occurred in society, for example in terms of education, socialization, role models and access to the new media, this has impacted

Muslim girls' and women's Islamic education as well. Rippin (2003: 178) argues that 'modernity is that which has created fundamental changes in behavior and beliefs about economics, politics, social organization and intellectual discourse'. Such changes have gradually occurred everywhere around the globe, and modernity can be seen as 'a world phenomenon' (Rippin, 2003: 178) although it maps out in different ways in different societies. According to Hefner (2007: 3), the modernizing of Muslim education has resulted in four main outcomes: an increased variety of Muslim educational institutions; transformations in *madrasahs* and Islamic higher education through modern social and intellectual developments; state efforts to reform and modernise Islamic education; and changes undertaken for 'the future of Islamic education in an age of globalisation and pluralisation'.

Against this general context, some modernist, feminist and reformist Muslim women scholars such as Mernissi (1985, 1991) and Ahmed (1992) have experienced modernity as the realization of women's disadvantages in society, politics, economics and education. Although producing both more liberal and conservative interpretations, they have therefore re-interpreted patriarchal Muslim traditions with reference to the authentic Islamic resources – the *Quran* and *Sunnah* (Roald, 2001: 91). For ordinary Muslim girls and women, too, an Islamic education also often begins when they 'return to religion' to seek answers to their modern problems and concerns with education, work and marriage. They increasingly 'return', however, 'not to the traditional indigenous understanding of religion, but to textual Islam as interpreted by educated religious scholars' (Pandya, 2012: 56). Moving away from blindly-followed religion and culture not only provides a 'purification of their religious beliefs', but also 'a move toward social progress, education and modernity' (Pandya, 2012: 55).

In the context of Malaysia and Britain, such modern trends are observable, too, and have begun to give women new skills through which to engage with the world. As this research in Kedah and Leeds shows, Muslim women are creating spaces for themselves and other women to grow in their religious identities (Gerhold, 1971; Manderson, 1978; cf. Modood, 2005; Musa, 2005; Smalley, 2006; Abbas, 2007; Ridzuan, 2016). Thus, this thesis explores how the school setting; ethos, teachers and religious education subjects have played their role in shaping their identity. Although the power of normative Islamic traditions and institutions in the shaping of such identities is significant, this study will also show the negotiations that take place between the culture, belief, policy and the school settings and values in the formation of Muslim women identities.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are: -

- 1) How do the Islamic schools' ethos, religious education subjects and teachers as role models affect the formation of Muslim women identity?
- 2) What type of Muslim women identities that both schools are aiming to produce?
- 3) To what extent do Kedah in Malaysia and Leeds in the United Kingdom differ in the shaping of Muslim women identity at school?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are: -

- 1) To explore the role of Islamic schools' ethos, religious education subjects and teachers as role models in the formation of Muslim women identity.
- 2) To investigate the type of Muslim women identity at both schools.
- 3) To compare the differences between Kedah in Malaysia and Leeds in the United Kingdom in the shaping of Muslim women identity at school.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is crucial to examine some key aspects of the evolvement of Muslim women education, including the women's perception, identity and attitude towards Islamic education in the past and present. These aspects are necessary to be examined because they contribute to the outcomes of education endeavour. In addition, many western studies have shown that Muslim women are passive, depressed and the victims of discrimination in pursuing education. Thus, this study is highly relevant to address the above problems.

Secondly, a study such as this is essential because Islamic girls' schools are becoming an important alternative school system in both Malaysia and The United Kingdom. As mentioned earlier, they have gained a great popularity among parents for schooling their daughters in moulding students' identities and personalities as well as for future undertakings (Halstead, 2010). The high demand for Islamic girls' schools is evidenced by the continuous increase of enrolments from year to year (Musa, 2005, 2007; Halstead, 2010), but very few studies have been conducted to investigate the shift attitude of Muslim women towards education.

Thirdly, this study can give an overall figure about the Islamic schools setting; ethos and environment, religious education subject and teachers and the process of inculcation of self-identity and how different it is in comparison to Leeds. It may give useful information that will help the teachers to build and implement a *biah solehah* (Islamic environment) at schools and guide the students to be good *Muslimah* for the nation.

Finally, it is hoped that this study contributes to enhancing the quality of Islamic schools both in Malaysia and the UK. Furthermore, it attempts to give resolutions to the problems of Islamic schools such as the school's setting and nature by revealing facts and ideas that in turn might contribute to a good Islamic ethos, environment, and curriculum at school. For instance, this can be done by observing the schools' system, ethos and environment and benchmarking them in order to make it suitable to the Islamic contemporary society. It is also hoped that such finding will be beneficial for students, educators as well as Islamic Education stakeholder planners in the future.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research will limit its focus to investigating the Muslim women identity in Kedah and Leeds. Maktab Mahmud (Girls), Alor Setar and New Horizon Community School (NHCS), Leeds have been chosen because of their similar nature setting. Both are non-government Islamic schools for girls. This will enable me to investigate the opinions of girls involved in the networks and how they construct their Islamic identity in the school settings. Using these different case studies also enable me to obtain multiple perspectives, responses, and insights into the experience of two different contexts; Muslim and non-Muslim society.

This research chooses Kedah and Leeds due to their demographic profiles which are the same. Kedah and Leeds are largely populated by Muslims which are 77% (Census 2010) and 4.4% (Census 2011) of the population respectively. Kedah is the earliest sultanate on the Malay Peninsula and is supposedly one of the oldest Sultanates in the world, allegedly founded in 1136 (Braddell, 1958; Al- Attas, 1969). It was also the earliest Malay sultanate that had relationship with Islam since 9 B.C (Braddell, 1958; Al- Attas, 1969). On the other hand, Leeds is one of the largest Muslim population areas in Britain and also one of the earliest Muslim settlement areas in 1950s (Geaves, 1996; Farrar, 2002). Hence, the development of Islamic education has started in line to the coming of Islam in order to fulfil and sustain the needs of Muslims both in Kedah and Leeds.

The reason of choosing Britain as my case study is also due to the opinions of some Muslims who say that many of their basic religious freedoms are sometimes better protected in a country like Britain than in some parts of the other European countries. For instance, the British government's granted permission for Muslims to build mosques and wear the *hijab* in public, whereas there were prohibitions on these religious phenomena in Switzerland (for minarets) and in France (for the *hijab*) (Nielsen, 1992, 1995, 2004)

In fact, the 2011 Census reported that there are approximately 2.7 million Muslims in the United Kingdom, representing 4.4 per cent of the total population, with 50 per cent of this population having been born in Britain (Moosavi, 2012). Muslims form the country's largest religious minority and come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The Muslim population almost doubled from 1.6 million (2.7 per cent of the UK

population) in the ten years since the 2001 census. Moosavi (2012) suggests that the reasons for this population growth are higher birth rates, the increase in Muslim asylum seekers as a consequence of unstable political situations in some Muslim countries², conversions to Islam, and identity politics³.

As the 2011 census statistics have only recently been published, I have used the 2001 census figures to profile the British Muslim population. The United Kingdom 2001 National Census statistics show that Muslims as a whole are by far the most disadvantaged faith group in the United Kingdom's labour market. Muslims are three times more likely to be unemployed than Christians, with the lowest employment rate of any group (38 per cent), the highest women's unemployment (68 per cent), the highest economic inactivity rate (52 per cent), and the highest proportion of uneducated citizens – 'almost half of all Bangladeshi men and women, 27 per cent of Pakistani men and 40 per cent of Pakistani women' have no academic qualifications (Halstead, 2005: 135).

In Leeds, according to the census 2001, Muslim population were about 21,394, representing 2.99 per cent of the total population. The Muslim population doubled to 40,772 (5.4 per cent of the city's population) in the 2011 census. The 2011 census gives the following figures for the number of other religious minorities living in Leeds: Hindus (7,048), Sikhs (8,914), and Buddhists (2,772). Meanwhile, in terms of ethnic groups, the last census provides figures such as Indians 16,130; Pakistan 22,492; Bangladeshi 4,432; Arabs 3,791 and so on (Census 2011). Bayram (2013: 84)

² For example, the Sudan, Somalia, Egypt, Libya and Syria.

³ Muslims have been proud to identify with their religion after the events of 9/11 and 7/7 'because they want to resist the Islamophobic discourses which have surrounded Muslim identities in recent years'. See Moosavi (2012).

argues that the multi-ethnic Muslim population in Leeds ‘conforms to the general pattern of Muslim communities in other metropolitan cities such as London, Birmingham and Bradford’.

The reason of not choosing other Asian countries as my case study is because of the similarity in some aspects which may affect the research findings. For example, even though Singapore is the nearest non- Islamic country, there are some similarities in terms of ethnicity, history and geography. In Singapore, the entry of Islam into Singapore cannot be separated from the entry process of Islam into Southeast Asia in general and Malaysia particularly (Abdullah Othman & Abdullah Yusuf, 2016). Similarly, the trend of Islamic education’s development is similar to Malaysia because geographically Singapore is one of the small islands in the Malay Peninsula. Thus, it impacted the demographic profile in terms of ethnicity as well. According to the 2010 National Census, there was about 14.1% of Malay ethnicity in Singapore. As such, until today, the majority of Muslims in Singapore are Malays (Kosim, 2011). The above arguments have become the reasons why I chose the UK as my case study. By choosing the UK, it gives me different context geographically, demographically, profile, cultures, politics and values.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This study consists of seven chapters: Chapter 1 contains the background of the study, statement of the research problem, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, organisation of the study, definition of the terms, conceptual framework, model of the research design and literature reviews. Chapter illustrates the literature review from various scholars in Malaysia and the

United Kingdom. Chapter 3 elaborates the research methodology Chapter 4 contextualizes Islamic education in Malaysia and the United Kingdom, beginning by mapping out the development of Islamic education and exploring the extent to which public recognition from Malaysia and the UK state support Muslims in setting up Islamic schools. Chapter 5 illustrates Muslim women identity in relation to Islamic education. Chapter 6 presents the data from MM and NHCS, Chapter 7 contains discussion of the research subjects. Chapter 8 consists of the conclusion, discussion of the findings, implications and recommendations for practice and future research.

1.8 Definition of the Terms

i. Muslim Women Identity

This research mainly uses the term Muslim women identity as opposed to Islamic women identity. Though the two no doubt overlap in many aspects, not least in the way they are used interchangeably, the term ‘Muslim identity’ is more appropriate for this study whilst the ‘Islamic identity’ requires an examination of theological definitions and criteria. Ramadan (1999: 179) suggests that Muslim identity, from an Islamic perspective, is ‘altogether faith, rulings, emotions and feelings which have to be organized, shaped and harmonized within a spiritual and active way of life’. However, in this thesis, I will explore the term ‘Muslim identity’ in the context of Muslim women.

ii. Ethos and Environment

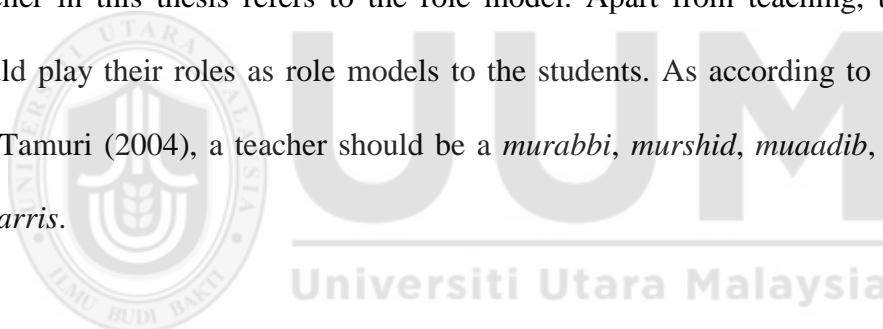
The terms ethos and environment in this research refer to the surrounding vibes as well as the physical environment of the school. It includes the criteria that can help in implementing the *biah solehah* such as the philosophy of the schools, the school culture and climate, rules and regulations, school activities and the whole school life.

iii. Religious Education Subject (RE)

The RE subject refers to the Islamic subjects which are known as KBD (Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini, Islamic Integrated Curriculum) in Malaysia. This KBD is comprised of *Usul al- Din, al- Syariah, al- Lughah al- Arabiah al- Mu'asirah, al- Manahij al- Ulum al- Islamiyyah* and *al- Adab wa al- Balaghah*. On the other hand, it is called Islamic curriculum in the UK. The Islamic curriculum has the religious education subjects (RE). This RE subject is focusing on four main strands of *Hadith, Fiqh, Aqidah* and *Sirah*.

iv. Teacher

Teacher in this thesis refers to the role model. Apart from teaching, teachers also should play their roles as role models to the students. As according to Ishak (1994) and Tamuri (2004), a teacher should be a *murabbi, murshid, muaadib, muallim* and *mudarris*.



1.9 Conceptual Framework

The role of Muslim girls' schools in shaping of Muslim women identity

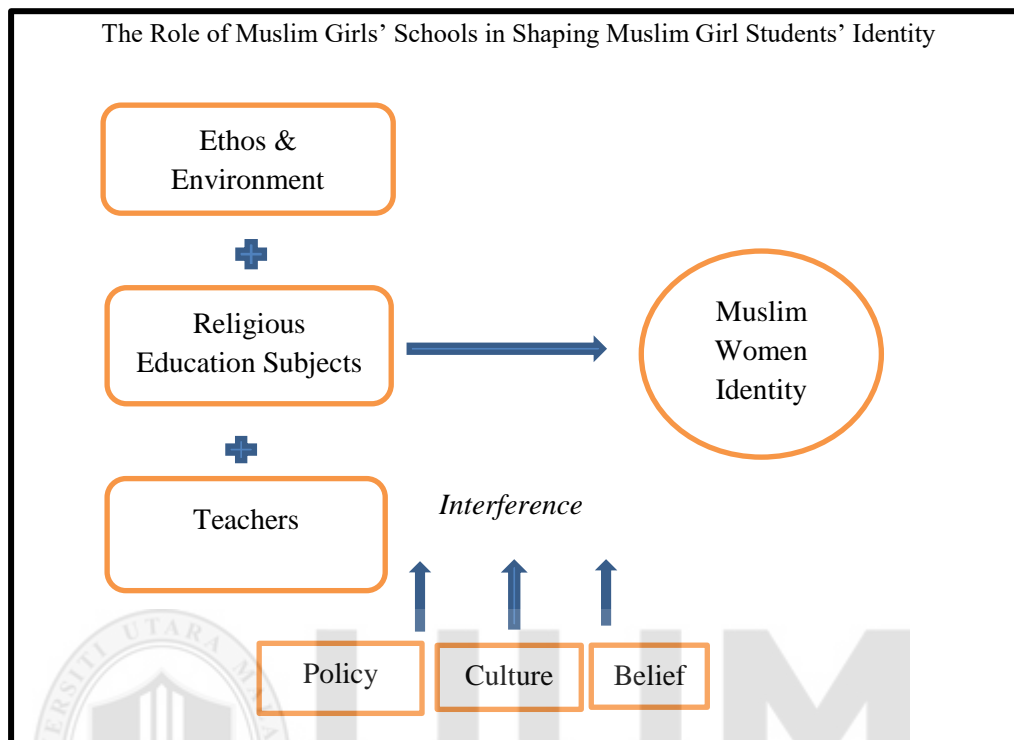


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

a) Muslim Women Identity

In this thesis, the Muslim women identity can be formed through Islamic schools. The emphasis upon the need to encourage students to be Islamic, educated, brave and active is clearly viewed as making a positive contribution to the community, and to be producing good mothers for the next generation. As argued in the *Bihesti Zewar* (Metcalf, 1997), Thanawi and his fellow reformist *ulama* wanted to make women knowledgeable, educated and able to stand against conservative opinion of the time⁴. Maulana insists that education can enhance a woman's *izzat* of the family and 'central to that role is knowledge of her place in relation to other human beings and to Allah' (Metcalf, 1997: 26). As commented by Metcalf in her book about Thanawi's view:

⁴ The conservatives viewed that women should stay at home and fully adhere the *izzat* and *sharam*.

His defense was that only an educated girl could fulfil her role properly, know what is owed to herself and to others, and know her proper relation to God. Nothing inherent limited her from developing intellectual skills or from cultivating the highest ideals of moral virtues (Melcalf, 1997: 37).

Sheikh Yusof Al- Qaradawi (1997) defined the Muslim women identity as below;

- 1) Islamic. Required to cover the *aurah* and perform religious obligations such as pray, fast, and give charity. As Allah says in the Quran,

"...So their Lord accepted their prayers, (saying): I will not suffer to be lost the work of any of you whether male or female. You proceed one from another"

- 2) Educated. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

"Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim". [Al-Bayhaqi]

- 3) Active and brave. As Allah says

" The believers, men and women, are "Awliy," (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another, they enjoin (on the people) Al-Ma`ruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do);and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar (i.e. polytheism and disbelief of all kinds, and all that Islam has forbidden). [Surah 9:71]

It is thus apparent that women are highly regarded and esteemed in an Islamic society, encouraged to participate actively for its betterment. This is referring to a Muslim woman who is Islamic, educated, brave and active like Khadijah R.A and Aisyah R.A.

b) Ethos and Environment

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ethos as the ‘characteristic spirit, prevalent tone of sentiment’ informing a human environment and context. School ethos, however, according to Halstead (2000: 171) is an ‘imprecise term’. He suggests that:

The term ethos encompasses the nature of relationships within a school, the dominant forms of social interaction, the attitudes and expectations of teachers, the learning climate, the way that conflicts are resolved, the physical environment, links with parents and the local community, patterns of communication, the nature of pupil involvement in the school, discipline procedures, anti-bullying and anti-racist policies, management styles, the schools’ underlying philosophy and aims and the system of caring.

Smith (2003: 465) proposes that:

School ethos embraces all aspects of school culture, climate and philosophy that impinge directly on pupil’s affective and cognitive learning and are perceived by all school’s stakeholders. It is constructed through an interaction between the culture mix of teachers, pupils, parents, the local community and the school’s official values system- mediated through organizational structures and processes and also by staff culture, climate and competence.

Ethos is also said to be subjective, something that is ‘felt rather than thought’ (McLaughlin, 2005, Jeffrey and Woods, 2003). Donnelly argues that ‘the ethos described formally in school documentation or defined by school authorities often departs considerably from the ethos which emerges from the intentions, interactions and behaviour of school members’ (2000: 137). This study will explore how far ethos can be conceptualized as an objective and a measurable phenomenon to the formation of Muslim identity at Islamic schools.

This research focuses on the question, what influence does an Islamic, supportive school environment have on the course of students’ identity? A substantial body of this research predicts that, for good or ill, a school’s social environment has broad

influence on students' learning and growth, including major aspects of their social, emotional, and ethical development (Leffert, Benson, & Roehlkepartain 1997, Halstead, 2000).

c) Religious Education Subjects (RE)

Generally, the purpose of RE subjects is to develop the potential of the individual in a holistic, balanced and integrated manner, encompassing the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects in order to create a balanced and harmonious human being with high moral standards. The goal of Islamic education is to produce a highly cultured man who is honourable and capable of discharging his responsibilities as a good person and a good citizen.

Generally, Muslim societies throughout the world are aware that they are in need of their own form of education that will shape identities and personalities according to the teaching of Islam based on God's revelation. As Nadvi (1986:48) mentioned, '...yet its (Religious education) products had certain excellent qualities, both personal and religious, which not only had imparted to it a distinctive character but also had made it superior to the modern educational system'. Muslim children need to be trained in a thorough and comprehensive educational system whereby the student's values, skills and awareness of himself, his society and his environment are well blended in a correct balance and thus produce a correctly-balanced individual. The quest for a truly Islamic system of education has never ceased and is particularly urgent amidst the rising tide of Islam worldwide.

Therefore, it is no wonder that knowledge is made as the basis and core of the achievement of *falah* (salvation), *najah* (satisfaction) and *sa'adah* (eternal bliss). This reveals why the first *wahy* (revelation) was about knowledge and why the Islamic tradition gives a great emphasis to knowledge. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has made the acquisition of knowledge compulsory for each individual in his *ummah* (Muslim community). He reported to have said, 'Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim' (Ibn Majjah vol.1, no. 224, ed.; n.d' and Tirmidhi vol. 1 no. 218, ed. 1998). It means the acquisition of knowledge is compulsory upon Muslim. The usage of the word *faridah* (obligatory) connotes the idea of command and whoever fails to comply with it, is subjected to punishment. Muhammad (S.A.W) was asked to struggle to establish and institutionalize knowledge.

Islamic education is pursued and practiced with modesty and humility and leads to beauty, dignity, freedom and justice. The main purpose of acquiring knowledge is to bring people closer to Allah. It is not simply for the gratification of the mind or the senses. Knowledge accordingly must be linked with values and goals. Human being has to choose either to attain his/her true self by showing his/her volition to become 'Abd Allah or 'to realize his/her identity independent of Allah i.e., in defiance of Him' (Kazmi, 2000: 376). This is the basic principle for Muslims to believe in. Nowadays, many Muslims neglect this important aspect. Al- Hashimi (2000) states that 'the Muslims as Islam meant him to be, is a unique and remarkable person in attitude and conduct and in his relationships and dealings with others at all levels'. As Bari (2000:47) proposes, '... education should aim at familiarizing the individual with the concepts of the responsibility in life, the relationship to other creatures, the responsibilities toward the human community, the social relations, the relationship to

the universe and universal phenomena and to the exploration of natural laws in order to utilize and exploit them and God's creative wisdom is apparent in His creation'.

In Malaysia, the JAKIM (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, Department of Islamic Development) has introduced the KBD (Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini, Islamic Integrated Curriculum) at Islamic schools. The objective of KBD is to prepare the students to be *musaqqaf* (cultured/ civilized) in the future. As far as Muslim students are concerned, they are expected to behave morally and exemplify righteous characteristics, both of which are based on the teaching of Islam. In achieving this objective, Islamic education plays an important role in nurturing Muslim children in Islamic teaching, particularly the aspect of *akhlak* and identity.

In Malaysia, Islamic Education is particularly significant for Muslim children although it is treated only as one among many subjects in the integrated curriculum for secondary schools. Ahmad (1996, p. 181) claims that Islamic education gives 'comprehensive emphasis on and attention to the strengthening of Islamic faith', the understanding of the Islamic characteristics and way of life, the guidance of good manners and virtuous ethics. Moreover, the philosophy of Islamic education has also been officially formulated as follows: Islamic education is a continuous effort to deliver knowledge, skill and emotional experience based on *al-Qur'an* and *al-Sunnah* in order to build behavior, skill, personality and a view of life as the servant of Allah, responsible for self-development, the community, the environment and the nation for the sake of prosperity and salvation in this world and in the hereafter (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2002). Today this continuous attempt can be seen in the latest statement of the aim of Islamic education, which is focused on the aspiration to

educate good Muslim students: The aim of Islamic education is to produce Muslims who are knowledgeable, devoted, pious, well-mannered and who also have virtuous characteristics based on *al-Quran* and *al-Sunnah* to become the righteous servants and vicegerents of Allah and contribute to civilization of race and nation (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2002).

On the other hand, in the UK, apart of being a good, knowledgeable and educated Muslim student, the emphasis is also to be a good British Muslim and engage with the wider British society. The central role of Muslim parents in imparting appropriate Islamic knowledge and practices to their children has also frequently been at the centre of government policy and political debate (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Hence, the School Development Support Agency (SDSA) designed a new curriculum for Islamic schools in 2006, introducing a new subject called Islam and Citizenship Education (ICE) as a compulsory subject for *madrasahs*. It was trialed in around thirty *madrasahs*, situated in London, Bristol, Bradford, Kirklees, Leicester, Oldham and Rochdale, and today it is taught in more than three hundred Islamic schools and *madrasahs* across the country. The ICE project aims to educate children and young people on their roles and responsibilities as Muslims within British society using the *Quran* and *Sunnah* for reference. Generally, the aims and objectives of this subject are in-line with state policy in the sense that they teach children about tolerance and respect, and how to play a constructive role in their schools and broader communities (Coles, 2008; Cherti et al., 2011).

Similarly, in May 2007, the Bradford Council for Mosques (BCM), together with Islamic scholars from the region and nationwide, launched a course for mosques and

madrasahs on practical citizenship called ‘Nasiha’ for twelve to sixteen-year-old students. At the end of the course students receive a certificate to indicate that they have successfully completed the course and achieved competence in a number of areas, such as English language; child protection policy; knowledge of relevant aspects of British society; and how to promote a healthy and safe environment for education and foster a common sense of belonging. The Nasiha curriculum aims to embed good teaching practices in *madrasahs* and to help young Muslims to understand their sacred roles and responsibilities in the society in which they live and interact (Lewis, 2007; Coles, 2008).

In 2007, the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) funded the *madrasah* Children’s Literacy Project, run by QED-UK⁵. This programme was designed ‘to create a more sustained dialogue between *madrasahs* and mainstream schools, as well as among governors, staff, parents and children’ (QED-UK 2008, see Cherti et al., 2011: 15). Moreover, this programme also aims to foster understanding between different communities, and to improve levels of literacy and overall educational attainments by ethnic minority pupils (QED-UK 2008. See Cherti et al., 2011).

The New Secondary Curriculum was launched in July 2007, and its ‘personalised, local and global perspectives allows and no longer requires pupils to leave their religion at home’ (Coles, 2008: 43). One of the aims of this curriculum is to help pupils to become successful learners, to be confident individuals and responsible citizens (Coles, 2008).

⁵ QED was founded in December 1990 to improve the educational, social and economic position of disadvantaged ethnic minorities.

Here, Islamic education is a process of forming the individual based on the teachings of Islam. Through this process, the human is developed to achieve a high prestige and is able to reach his duty as Allah the Almighty's vicegerent on earth (al-Baqarah 2:31). Indeed, understanding the *Quran* and Islamic education is important for every practicing Muslim, especially those living in non-Muslim countries, who need to also understand how to contextualize it in relation to their host societies (Abrams, 2011; Cherti et al., 2011).

d) Teacher

Abdullah Ishak (1995) argues that teachers are important to help students acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour change, and to instill the desired values. Teacher identity development and change is shaped by the interrelationship between personal and experience, and professional knowledge linked to the teaching environment, students, curriculum and culture of the school (Proweller & Mitchener, 2004). In a research done by H.M. Nurdin (2010), from an Islamic point of view, the teacher is an educator and a guide academically and spiritually. This is because the entire process of learning at school is in the hand of the teacher. A teacher is a medium to deliver the knowledge and to develop the knowledge by instilling the good values in the students. The teacher should have the *murabbi* characteristics in order to mould a good behaviour in the students.

Murabbi means to educate, to take responsibility, to feed, to care, or to love, be it physically or spiritual. Kazmi (2015) defines *murabbi* as a knowledgeable person, wise and also pious, kind and considerate. According to him, *murabbi's* life is the life of learning and the life of virtue. Thus, *murabbi* is a perfect and an ideal person to

learn from. Tamuri (2000; 2006) argues that teachers as *murabbi* serve to protect, grow, give love, teach, educate, nurturing and preserving the nature of students and to develop their talents and abilities that exist within them. Teachers have to realize the formation and development of the students in terms of human's physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual in order to produce a good identity in accordance to the Islamic perspective (Tamuri, 2006).

There are some Muslim scholars who discuss teacher's qualifications as *murabbi* in their writing like al-Ghazali (t.th.), Abdullah Nasih Alwan (1968), al-Nahlawi (1979), al-Hammadi (1987) and al-Hafiz al-Suwaid (1988). Among the characteristics of a *murabbi* teacher according to Imam al-Ghazali are: 1. To care for the students as if they are part of our own family; 2. Constantly giving advice to the students in every aspect including their study and behaviour; and 3. Monitor the students' discipline by slow talk approach. As for Ahmad Mohd Salleh (1997), the characteristics of a *murabbi* teacher are: 1. Prioritising the students' safety and welfare; 2. Be fair to all students regardless the family background, academic level and economy status; 3. To keep the students information secret except for the deserving party; 4) Always be ready to guide the students in the dressing manner, way of speech and good behaviour to serve as an example for the students.

According to Zakiyah Daradjat (2011: 39), educating and developing a good identity at schools can be done through role models (teachers), thus she suggests that:

a. Teachers should always do good activities with students during spare time, for example; sports, teamwork etc.

- b. Teachers must always emphasize on moral values and *akhlak* in all school activities, for example; separating men and women in sport activities.
- c. Teachers should observe the attitude of students inside and outside of the school's compound.
- d. Schools should provide guidance and counseling office to help students who have symptoms that will lead to the demoralization.
- e. Teachers and teaching staff should be able to be role models to the students. The conditions that must be met to be role models are as follows:

- a) *Takwa*
- b) Academic qualification and teacher training
- c) Healthy
- d) Good ethic and behaviour

Concerning the significant relationship between school and teacher, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1987) explains that the teacher in Islam has an ethical duty as a *murabbi* (a trainer of souls and personalities) and not only a *mu'allim* (a transmitter of knowledge). From another point of view, Rosnani Hashim (1997) and Tamuri and Ismail (2006) associate 'teacher' with the ethical term *adab*. A teacher is a *mu'addib* in that he or she is not only concerned with the transmission of skill and knowledge but also 'the inculcation of *adab* which is the discipline of mind, body and soul' (Rosnani Hashim, 1997, p. 57).

Although there is a difference in terms of expression, these two Arabic terms, *murabbi* and *mu'addib*, clearly show that the teacher in Islam has an ethical

involvement. The ideal teachers in Islam should refer to the Prophet Muhammad, his companions and also great Muslim scholars. Halstead (1995, p. 31) states that ‘teachers were expected not only to be learned, but also to have a deep personal commitment to faith and to be a living example of virtue and piety which students could unhesitatingly emulate’.

Generally, in the context of Malaysia and Britain, a school today is responsible not only for the transmission of knowledge and skills, but also for social and moral development, which was previously parents’ responsibility. Nowadays, Islamic education teachers have considerable responsibilities in the development of students’ *akhlak* and identity (Tamuri et al., 2004; Tamuri & Ismail, 2006). They are considered as role-models for students in schools and this responsibility includes encouraging and building good relationships with students and also exemplifying good deeds to the students.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of general problems facing by Muslim women in developing their Islamic identity particularly in Malaysia and the UK in the past. Nowadays, Muslim women in Kedah and Leeds are actively pursuing education and involving in the public sphere. Indeed, the Muslim women identity shifted through their interactions with education and contemporary society. To sum up, all the issues involving Muslim women identity require the Muslim institutions and community to show commitment to their values, and support is required from the state to ensure that the Muslim women identity are suitable to the contemporary modern society.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature in this study focuses on four areas. They are 1) Muslim women identity, 2) Islamic schools and Islamic education, 3) Islamic schools and ethos and environment, and 4) Islamic schools and teachers as role models.

2.2 Muslim Women Identity

There is a plethora of literatures, theories, and models available on the identity development of students (Evans, et. al, 2010), but very little of this research and literature focuses on the development of Muslim women identity at Islamic schools. Sensitivity toward Muslim women identity development at school is necessary and not currently being given the attention it deserves. While all Muslim girl students may face more difficult identity work during their school-going experience than other faith students, this research believes that Muslim girls may face even more challenges than Muslim boys (Jawad, 2003; Smalley, 2006; Din, 2017; Breen, 2018). It is because, sometimes Muslim girls are always bounded by their culture, tradition, and religious tradition and obligations (Haw, 1998; 2011). Through this study, my intent was to begin to fill what is currently a large gap in the literature related to the development of Muslim girl students' identity.

Louise (1998) suggests that the young women reproduced and resisted stereotypical discursive of themselves as oppressed and passive victim. However, this study

discussed from a critical, feminist conceptualisations of identity which challenge positivistic social psychological theories of ethnic identity.

Smalley (2006) in her PhD thesis discussed the Islamic nurture amongst second generation Pakistanis and Khojas in Peterborough. Her thesis only discussed the role of parents in the nurturing of Islamic identity at home. Meanwhile, Nazia Latiff (2002), discussed the women rights and identity in Islam by looking at the areas of family law, political and legal participation.

Meanwhile, Azizah Kassim (1969) who studied the Malay women community in Malaysia, she argued that in a traditional Malay society, the status, role and status of women have been set according to the norms and beliefs of the community. Similarly, Ridzuan (2016) indicates that the identity formation among Malay women was bounded by tradition and culture. Both of them agreed that aspects such as position, role and status of Malay women are among the important aspects that need to be examined as it has a close relationship with level of one's Malay woman education.

Nik Safiah Karim (1990), in her book *Malaysian Women, Hope and Challenges* has discussed in detail about women in Malaysia, especially in the areas of female education, leadership, family development, political engagement and organization and also the crisis of female identity in the 21st century. She also discussed the involvement of women in education which is said to be very encouraging especially in the late 20th century. However, this research only discussed the development of Malay women's identity in the late of 20th century.

Wazir Jahan Karim (1992) in his book *'Women and Culture, Between Malay Adat and Islam'* has discussed in depth about the impact of Malay's customs and culture on the position, role and rights of Malay women in Malaysia. Moreover, he also discussed the role and position of Malay women in the early days by referring to the classical texts of the Malay literatures. He also discussed about acceptance secular education to the Malay girls who have given many effects on the level of thinking and awareness among Malay women. In addition, he also discussed the impact of education on the awareness of Malay women in politics and the involvement of Malay women in political party after the Second World War. However, the discussions are made quite limited and use a lot of secondary resources. However, his writing is helpful especially in understanding the influences of custom and religion on identity, perceptions, positions and roles of Malay women in Malaysia.

Mahani Musa (2003) in his study entitled *'History and Socio-Economics Malay Women of Kedah 1881-1940'*, has discussed in detail about Kedah women from social and economic aspects. The study focuses on the improvement of socio-economic of Malay women in Kedah and their problems during that time. Her study can help the researchers in understanding the whole range of Malay women education, British policy towards Malay education and the Malay's reaction towards women's education which is much related to the development of Muslim women identity nowadays. However, the study involved the education of Malay women in Kedah only.

2.3 Islamic Schools and Islamic Education

Islamic schools play a vital role in developing and promoting Muslim women identity to the students. This is because an Islamic school provides Islamic education and also

has an environment in which the students can learn and live Islam, create social and emotional stability and develop a strong sense of belonging to the Muslim *Ummah*. The Islamic school does not only preserve the Islamic heritage and value per se, but contributes towards development and progress of the Muslim *Ummah* in general (Ishak, 1995; Tamuri, 2004; Halstead, 2005; Gillita- Ray, 2010; Sound, 2017; Din, 2017; Breen, 2018).

Generally, the aim of the existence of Islamic school is to provide education as well as to develop and promote *shaksiyah*. The existence of Islamic schools clearly shows that parents are very concerned about the importance of Islamic education. Islamic schools contribute in moulding a generation of Muslims who are pious and have the ability to preach and practice the Islamic way of life as instructed by Allah. Azra (2008) points out that education aims at holistic human development. Thus, Islamic schools should help people develop spiritually, intellectually, and socially. Al-Syaibani (1979 see in Abas Asyafah, 2014) notes:

...there are three objectives of Islamic education: first, human objectives which are related to self improvement in form of knowledge, behaviour, intelligence and self-actualization. Second, is the social objective related to living together, and third, professional objective which takes education and learning as an important component considering Islamic education as field of knowledge, an art, and as professional as well as a social activity in the community.

With regards to the teaching of Islamic education at Islamic schools, Sharif (1976, p. 45) argues that Islamic education is ‘the device for helping an individual to full stature’. His elaboration involves the ‘assimilation of Divine attributes’ leading to a life of ‘unity, power, freedom, truth, beauty, goodness, love, and justice’ (ibid). Abdul

Halim el-Muhammady (1993) explains that Islamic education gives focus on several concepts namely; life-long learning, to be a responsible human beings and to preach and practice the Islam. In fact, this Islamic education promotes piety, honesty, propriety, trustworthiness, passion and good moral values (Khadijah, 2009). This total commitment to character-building based on the ideals of Islamic ethics is the highest goal of Islamic education. (Al-Attas, 1979). A more comprehensive definition of Islamic education was composed at the First World Conference on Muslim Education where participants were of the following view:

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, his rational self, feelings and bodily senses. Education should cater therefore for the growth of man in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively and motivate all aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large. (Ashraf, 1985, p. 4)

Abdullah Ishak (1995) defines Islamic education as basically a process of training the mind, physical, moral, and social sense to be a good man and a good citizen. This differs with that of Hassan Langgulung (1995) who provides analysis of the concept of Islamic education as having two purposes: The first is that education is public in nature, which includes spiritual, physical, emotional, social, political, cultural, economic, and other types of education relating to human life. Public education is to educate people to practice the teachings of Islam in their daily lives which include economic, cultural, social, and other aspects. Second, Islamic education is limited i.e. it provides a commonly called religious knowledge such as; *tawheed*, *fiqh*, *faraid*, *sufism* and others comprising of knowledge and knowledge on compulsory religious

obligations. He also concludes that Islamic education is the process of preparation of young people to fill their role in the transfer of knowledge and Islamic values that are aligned with the function of humans to do good in this world and reap the rewards in the hereafter (Hassan Langgulung, 1995). However, Sharif (1976); Ishak (1995); Langgulung (1995) and Azra (2008) described Islamic education theoretically, while in this research I explore the importance of Islamic education in a real-life setting.

All of the above scholars discussed the importance of Islamic schools and Islamic education in a general way (Sharif, 1976; Abdul Halim el-Muhammady, 1993; Ishak, 1995; Azra, 2008; Khadijah, 2009). However, Lickona (1992) and Nik Rosila (2013) discussed the importance of Islamic schools and Islamic education in facing a modern contemporary society. According to them, academic and virtue should be taught together in order to live a noble life.

2.4 Islamic Schools and Ethos and Environment

According to Fawzia (n.d), the aim of an Islamic school is to provide an environment which allows the student to realize these ideals and gain an education that enhances students' spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific and linguistic growth that allows a pupil to build a positive relationship with God and human. Due to the modernization, globalization, and secularization, it is necessary for students to understand how to behave in society. In other words, students must be aware of the values and virtues society wants as they face new life demands. The question arising is how to make students concern on their Muslim identity in such a rapidly changing world. According to Lickona (1992), Nik Rosila (2013), people should be taught both academics and virtue or good character in order to live a noble life. Islamic education

is regarded as a subject whose function is to develop and instill positive values in students through appropriate instruction process.

However, Rosnani Hashim (1998); Proweller and Mitchener (2004); Halstead (2005) and Nik Rosila (2013) insisted that the Islamic values need to be advocated and practised by the entire school starting from the principal, teachers, the staffs and for sure the students. This will invest in the improvement of the discipline and less monitoring is needed. According to Rosnani Hashim (1998), the school administration must observe the students' behaviour and activities as the students do have their own desire that needs to be controlled and guided with some advice.

Even though the main interest of Muslim parents was on learning the skills for academic success, a number also placed emphasis on the issue of Muslim women identity; they felt that their daughters would only be able to achieve success if they knew who they were and were confident in their identity. Many parents felt the Islamic school had a critical role in helping their daughter to prepare for life as a Muslim woman in a secular society, while mothers who had chosen the Islamic school believed it was most likely to provide the sense of identity needed for survival and success in the wider society (Osler, et.al., 1995; Din, 2017).

According to Osler et. al. (1995) in their research 'Parental Choice and Schooling', a number of the mothers who had chosen to send their daughters to an Islamic school stressed the importance of partnership between school and home, particularly in the area of values education. Similarly, Din (2017) in her book, 'Mothers and their Children's Schooling' insists that Islamic schools should fulfil the need of Muslim

children particularly in the issue of Muslim identity formation and its preservation. Both Malaysia and the UK have seen that the state schools did not adequately meet parents' expectations and students' needs in facing the challenging society. Both Osler et. al (1995) and Din (2017) agreed that in the UK particularly, this view is much significant, as for parents, the Islamic schools have a set of values that are similar with those at home.

Mays (as cited in Mir, 2007) discussed the environment on college campuses and how it may affect students' identity development. Mays used the term 'identity work' rather than identity development. While she was referring to development, she discussed the struggle and turmoil that may accompany identity development of the college's students. However, in this research, I fill the gap on the school's ethos and environment and its relation to the students' identity development.

Osler et. al. (1995) also added that parents enrolled their children in Islamic schools because they see Islamic schools as not only a place for their children to learn about values, but also as a place for children to gain appropriate educational qualifications to enable them to establish economic independence. Indeed, the understanding of Islam has accommodated equal opportunities for girls and women in gaining educational qualifications and in employment, at the same time as promoting a 'different but equal' role for women in the social, economy, public and domestic sphere.

2.5 Islamic Schools and Teachers as Role Models

Scholars such as Mustafa (1999); Al- Hawamleh (2003) and Noor Najihan and Tamuri (2006; 2013) claimed that the role of teachers as role models can enhanced the development of individual potential in a holistic, balanced and integrated manner, encompassing the intellectual, spiritual, and physical aspects. However, reaching the level of moral and good personality requires a process. This process can be facilitated through teaching and learning. Learning takes place only if the teachers play their roles as *muallim*, *mudarris*, *muaddib*, *murshid* and *murabbi* to the students (Tamuri, 2006).

Zakiyah Derjat (2011) and Hamid and Kila (2017) discussed the role of teachers as role models to the society from an Islamic perspective. However, their discussion only focused on the personality of role models. Furthermore, they provide no qualitative data on the experiences of role models which influence and shape the students' Muslim identity.

To sum up, Rosnani Hashim (1998) and Halstead, (2005) discussed only the importance of ethos and environment of Islamic schools to the students in the formation of Islamic identity. While Tamuri (2006), H.M. Nurdin (2010) and Zakiyah Derjat (2011) only emphasized on the role of teachers as role models at school. Yet, Proweller and Mitchener (2004) have discussed the combination of three element; ethos and environment, RE and teachers as role models but failed to explore education and socio-cultural reproduction in non-Western and Islamic contexts and Islamic point of views.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion this research will fill these gaps in the following ways: 1) I investigate the school setting: ethos and environment, RE subjects and teachers as role model. 2) I employ two case studies at two different contexts; Muslim and a non- Muslim country which acknowledges respondents as Muslims from a variety of backgrounds and Islamic practices, and therefore examines the intersectionality of ethnicity, culture and policy. 3) I prioritize the unique perspectives of girl students at MM and NHCS, and give them the opportunity to express their opinions on Islamic schooling and Muslim women identity. 4) I provide ‘thick description’, or, detailed, qualitative data on the day-to-day practices of MM and NHCS and examine the role of these Islamic schools in Muslim women identity development.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This is a qualitative study, a comparative and a narrative analysis which employed participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. It embarks on two case studies, each of which examines matters of ethos and environment, religious education subjects and teachers in the formation of Muslim women identity.

The case-studies in question are Maktab Mahmud (Girls), and New Horizon Community School (NHCS). As this research focuses on Muslim women identity and Islamic education for Muslim women in Kedah and Leeds, the research chose to undertake case studies at Islamic school institutions within Kedah and Leeds. This enables me to investigate the opinions of women involved in networks and how they compare to the common Western view that Muslim women are depressed and passive (Siann & Khalid, 1984; Osler et al., 1995), and how they reconstruct their identity; perception and attitude.

This chapter provides details of the research methods utilized in this thesis specifically in relation to the research design; the data collection process and data analysis that arose through engaging with a number of research questions. These included: ‘What is the subject of my research?’ ‘Where should I carry out the research?’ ‘What is a feasible design for accomplishing the intended research?’ ‘How should I conduct the research?’ ‘What are the appropriate instruments to use?’ and ‘How should I collect, analyse and interpret the data?’ (Nga, 2009: 65).

Then this chapter will describe the issues of ethics and limitations in the fieldwork process. The following section provides a reflexive evaluation of how the researcher's status as both an insider and outsider, a Malaysian Muslim woman from the same culture in Kedah and a different culture in Leeds, may have had an impact on the findings of this research. It also will focus on the similarities and differences between the researcher and the respondents in terms of ethnicities and backgrounds and discuss the relevance of being an insider-outsider researcher (Knott, 2005).

3.2 Research Design

This research has employed a comparative study as it allowed me to make comparisons in various aspects. According to Pickvance (2005), comparative analysis is used mainly to explain, to investigate, to compare and to gain a better understanding of the causal processes involved in the creation of an event, feature or relationship. Importantly, comparative analysis emphasized on the 'explanation of differences, and the explanation of similarities' (Azarian, 2011:2). As my research is about the shaping of Muslim women identity at two different countries, hence, by doing this comparative study has helped me to understand the challenges, issue, similarities and differences between both countries; Malaysia and the UK.

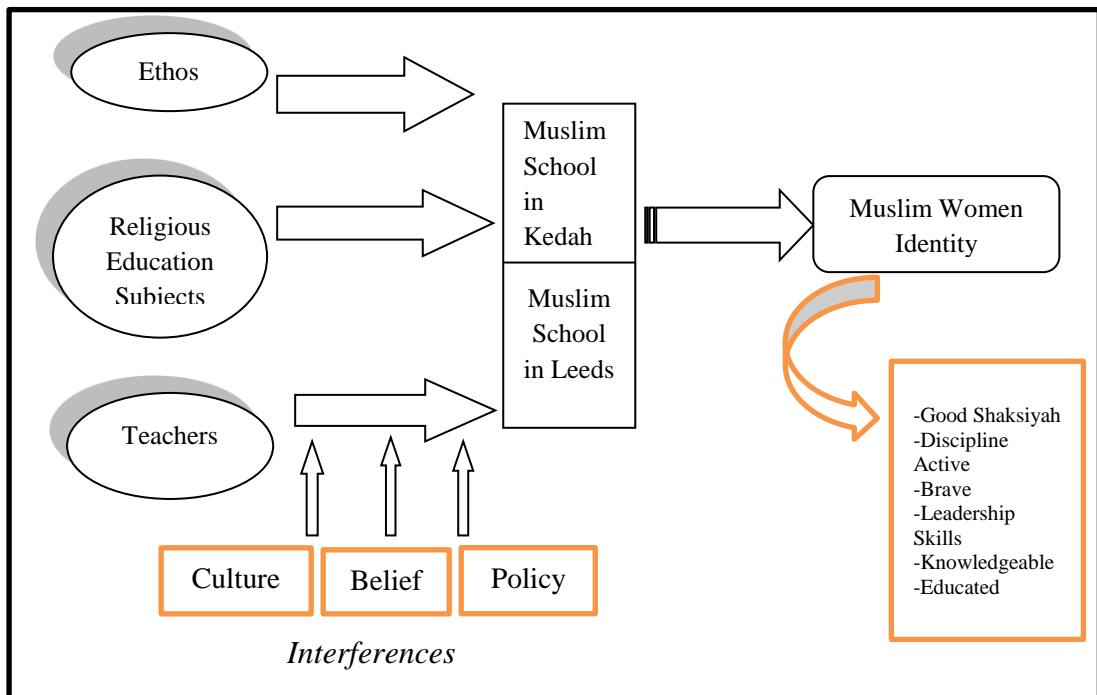


Figure 3.2: Model of Research Design

The debate outlined here refers to three broad theoretical themes; ethos and environment, religious education subjects and teachers which are used to drive this research study. Each of these themes - both in themselves and in their close relationship with each other - comprises the foundation from which to explore Muslim women identity construction amongst young Muslims at schools. By reviewing some contemporary debates on Muslim women identity, this study presented the basis from which to develop the study. The main concept which will be examined with the respondents is the formation salience of Muslim women identity.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Case Studies

The case study allows the researcher to describe and place evidence in clear contexts (Shipman, 1997; Yin, 2013; Creswell, 2014). As Kromrey (1986: 320) notes, ‘case study research involves studying individual cases, often in their natural environments, and connotes spatially delimited phenomena observed at single points in time or for long periods of time’ (see also Gerring, 2007: 19; Nga, 2009: 67). These case studies were carried out in order to understand the inner feelings and experiences of Muslim girls receiving Islamic education in a Muslim and a non-Muslim country, and the efforts of Muslim teachers and institutions to provide Islamic education and to develop Muslim identity to them. In order to explore the process of identity formation at school as well as to understand their social lives as Muslim girls and women, sufficient time is required at the case-study sites – Maktab Mahmud (MM) and New Horizon Community School (NHCS). However, as MM and NHCS are schools with structured setting, the researcher’s presence there for any longer than the three months period may start to hinder or interfere with the schools’ time, the students’ learning, and the staff’s duties. Despite the limited time spent at the different institutions, rich data were collected at all these sites in an intensive way of data collection. Thus, I routinely collected and wrote up the data, recorded the observations, reflections and any developing theories in the notebook.

The rationale for the selection of case studies is based on variables in this research: the environments and ethos and teachers that needed to be investigated in real-life contexts, where ‘the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’, and the benefits of utilizing multiple methods of data collection and analysis

(Yin, 1991: 23; 2013; Bell, 1999; Nga, 2009; Creswell, 2014). In fact, neither the ethos, the environments of the institutions, nor the experiences, feelings, identity and behaviors of the respondents could have been investigated in depth without the researcher's presence within the data 'sets'. Moreover, as Denscome (2003) argues, using the multiple methods approach can produce more and different kinds of data than just using the single method approach, and can therefore produce mutually supporting methods for data collection, which will likely improve the quality of the research. Therefore, this research will use a large variety of documents, interviews and observation to provide an in-depth analysis of Muslim women identity in Kedah and Leeds. Such a holistic and in-depth investigation is necessary for obtaining meaningful characteristics of real life in Muslim educational settings, and findings that can be of value to practitioners.

This study chooses to undertake two case studies because, as Nga (2009) notes, 'a multiple-case study might be preferred over a single case study because analytical conclusions from multiple cases can be more powerful' (Nga, 2009: 69). Using these different case studies also enables the researcher to obtain multiple perspectives, responses and insights into the experience of different constituencies, such as leaders, teachers, and students.

3.3.1.1 Maktab Mahmud

Maktab Mahmud is one of the earliest formal Islamic schools in Kedah. Hence, it is the most popular Islamic school in Kedah and Malaysia. It is popular due to its success in producing excellent students in academic as well as in *sakhsiyah*. As this research is about Muslim identity, Maktab Mahmud Alor Setar was the perfect school

for doing fieldwork. Besides, this school has been chosen for this case study because of its nature which is laterally similar to NHCS. This is a non- government school which practices separation between gender. After few discussions with the Lembaga (governor) and the principal, finally I have received permission to conduct the fieldwork (see appendix ii- permission letter). I started the fieldwork at MM in September 2016. The respondents at this school were categorized into four groups:

- 1) The (1) governor
- 2) The (1) head teacher
- 3) Four (2) teachers
- 4) Thirty (30) students (aged 16)

3.3.1.2 New Horizon Community School

NHCS is the first Leeds's community Islamic girls school since 1994 and the most popular Islamic school in Leeds. It is popular due to its success in producing excellent students in academic as well as in developing the *shaksiyah*. Moreover, this school emphasizes the students to be aware of their responsibilities as *Muslimahs*, young women, as members of a family and British society.

This school has been chosen for this case study because of its nature which is laterally similar to MM. This is a non- government school and a single- sex school. NHCS is an independent Muslim girls' school on the border of Chapel Allerton and Chapeltown, an area of Leeds adjacent to Harehills. I met a governor of NHCS – Dr Razaq Raj – in the Islamic Studies Network at the University of Leeds, and he offered me the opportunity to carry out a case study at NHCS, thus acting as the 'broker' for the fieldwork access (Bryman, 2008: 409; McLoughlin, 2009). I have emailed him in

order to find out what procedures I needed to follow before accessing the school, and after all the documents (comprising a permission letter- see appendix ii, an information sheet- see appendix iii and a document explaining the requirements for informed consent- see appendix iv and v) were sent via e-mail, I were given permission to access to the school.

I spent about three months attending the school for two or three days a week (depending on the school's instructions). The respondents at this school were categorized into four groups:

- 1) The (1) governor
- 2) The (1) head teacher
- 3) Four (2) teachers
- 4) Thirty (30) students (aged between 15 and 16)

3.3.2 Instruments

This research utilizes both primary and secondary data. Pierce (2008) claims that the corroboration of sources provides more adequate answers and enhances research quality. The primary data in this research were collected from interviews, participant observation and focus groups, while the secondary data were collected from documentation and media resources, such as blogs, television and the internet. Each type of data instrument and collection method will be discussed separately in the following sections.

3.3.2.1 Primary Data

The primary data used in this research were semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant observation.

3.3.2.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews

After conducting an initial search of the relevant literature on Muslim women identity, Islamic schools and Islamic education both in Muslim and non- Muslim countries, this study decides to use semi- structured interviews to collect data, as this method offers opportunities for both control and openness. This instrument worked well as the process was informal and depended a great deal on the responses of the person being interviewed. Generally, no specific instrument was used in this research, but, for the interview sessions, I referred to a set of questions (see appendix vi), a pen and a notebook and use a voice recorder.

The interview provides ‘a good way of accessing people’s perceptions and the meanings and definitions they attach to situations and constructions of reality’ (Punch, 1999: 174-175). These interviews provided an opportunity for Muslim girls to voice their opinions and raise their own concerns and issues. Until recently, much of the literature has only taken on board men’s perspectives (Smalley, 2002). The benefit of using interviews is that this technique is flexible, and this means that ‘the interviewer can follow up leads, probe, ask for clarification when necessary and provide greater depth and detail’ (Hashim, 2006: 172).

The content of the interviews focused on many aspects related to the research questions. The interviews were about the ethos of the institutions, the teaching and

learning that takes place within them, the teachers and the women's experiences of, perception towards the school settings and how the whole school setting has affected their identity formation. However, I chose the themes that were covered in relation to Muslim women identity and education at the two institutions as I wanted 'to control the content to a large extent in order to enable a measure of comparability' (Smalley, 2002: 61).

3.3.2.1.2 Informants

Interviews were also conducted with number of informants including community leaders, professionals and scholars—who expert and have first hand knowledge about Islamic schools, Islamic education, Muslim community in Britain in general.

Lavrakas (2008: 407) defined the key informant as below:

A person with whom an interview about a particular organization, social program, problem, or interest group is conducted. In a sense, the key informant is a proxy for her or his associates at the organization or group. Key informant interviews are in-depth interviews of a select (nonrandom) group of experts who are most knowledgeable of the organization or issue.

According to Bernard (1995); Houston & Sudman (1975); Morris (2009); Soucy (2000); Warheit, Buhl Roger, & Joanne (1978) the informants' views may affect how they define Islamic schools, Islamic education and Muslim community and what they perceive as community strengths, weaknesses, needs, and potential.

These experts, with their particular knowledge, understanding and experiences can provide insight on the nature of problems and give recommendations for solutions. As suggested by Tremblay (1957) that key informants should meet the following criteria,

first; hold formal positions in the community, second; have knowledge relevant to the study, third; willing to share this knowledge, communicate well, and finally; should be unbiased or able to reflect upon their own biases. Thus, my key informants as below:

- 1) Mr Akram Khan Cheema⁶
- 2) Dr Ataullah Siddiqui
- 3) Dr Abdullah Sahin⁷

Moreover, interview has also been conducted with winners of the AMS UK Awards 2009 in order to know their feelings and experience working inside the Islamic schools. They are:

- 1) The head teacher of Noor Ul Islam Primary School in Leyton, London, the winner of the AMS-UK School of the Year Award 2010.
- 2) The head teacher of Al-Noor Independent School in Ilford, London, the winner of the AMS-UK Citizenship/Community Cohesion Award 2010.
- 3) Nusrat Mohammed in Blackburn, the winner of the AMS-UK Teacher of the Year Award 2010.

⁶ who was awarded an Order of British Empire (OBE) by the Queen

⁷ from Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) in Leicester. They are both (Dr. Ataullah and Dr. Abdullah Sahin) muslim scholars who work on Muslim issues and Islamic education in Britain.

3.3.2.1.2.1 The Interview Process

Interview schedules were developed with the agreement of the relevant institutions, with the relevant teachers or leaders ensuring that the interviews were run outside learning and teaching hours. The interview questions covered the following areas: demography, experience, problems, feedback and suggestions (see appendix vi for details). These questions were piloted on three friends who are lecturers in Islamic studies and one from the Faculty of Education in order to check the order of questions and to identify any ambiguous or confusing wording. My supervisor also reviewed the questions before the interview process began, and some changes were made as a result of the feedback that was received. This pre-testing of the instruments was beneficial in making me aware of the potential responses and possible misunderstandings that might occur during the interview sessions.

I tried to eliminate respondents' hesitation to answer certain questions in the interviews by stressing that the information provided for the study was confidential and would not harm the interviewee or others. As this research seeks information regarding the experiences of leaders, teachers, students and other individuals and organisations, I needed to protect the identities of the participants in order to prevent them from feeling vulnerable after the research especially the NHCS's respondents. In particular, questions about their experiences of Islamic education in a non-Muslim society, and their Islamic practices and perspectives can be quite sensitive and personal subjects that can cause discomfort. I needed to handle these topics in a way that showed respect for the informants, and make sure that they were aware that they were not compelled to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable with. In the event that participants felt vulnerable, uncertain or upset, interviews would be

suspended to give them time to recover and to consider whether they would like to continue with the process or withdraw from the research. In the event that participants were distressed and decided to withdraw from the research, they would not be pressured re-join it. For convenience and psychological security, interviews were conducted in a place that was both private and convenient for the interviewee.

Most of the interviews were 'one-to-one' and took between thirty and sixty minutes, but some interviews were conducted with pairs of interviewees. At the beginning of the interviews, the respondents were handed information sheets (see appendix ii) and consent forms (see appendix iv and v) to complete before the interview commenced, and the interviews were transcribed as soon as possible following their completion. Denscombe (2003) strongly encourages transcribing, as transcripts are the interviewer's notes and her data for analysis.

The interview questions were structured in a sequence, which allowed the interview to flow naturally from point-to-point. In framing the questions, I carefully used words that would not involve issues that were too sensitive. As Nisbet and Entwistle (1970) observe, in order to establish a rapport between the interviewer and the respondents, I should begin the interview session with simple questions, building up to the more complex ones later on. The participating students included both volunteers and those that were randomly selected. Random selection works by selecting the names listed on the classroom's name list. Then, these chosen students were handed a consent form (see appendix v) to give to their parents. The random selection process does not put pressure on students to submit to interview. After getting consent from the parents and students, I discussed the interview's schedule with the school's management.

3.3.2.1.3 Focus Groups

Focus groups were used at MM and NHCS. Thus, I chose 7 participants for each school. The focus group method is a form of group interview in which there are several participants who have been selected by the researcher beforehand. It ‘emphasizes the questioning on a particular, fairly tightly defined topic and the accent is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning’ (Bryman, 2008: 475). According to Bryman (2008: 475):

A focus group [...] contains elements of two methods: the group interview, in which several people discuss a number of topics; and what has been called a *focused interview*, in which interviewees are selected because they ‘are known to have been involved in a particular situation’ (Merton et al., 1956: 3) and are asked about that involvement.

This research used the focused interview, as it had already decided on what topics would be discussed and who would be involved in the interviews. Moreover, Bryman (2008) claims that the focused interview had advantages over the group interview in that by attaching to the shared area of interest it provides an element of interaction within the group. In order to decide who would be involved in the focus group, I closely observed the girls’ answers, attitudes and commitment during my one-to-one interviews with them, and built up a good rapport with them before using the focus group. Nonetheless, there were still difficulties with organising the focus group, particularly in obtaining an agreed time and venue. After a long conversation and a number of compromises with the teachers, the focus group interview with the students commenced during a break time and continued for another thirty minutes afterwards to finish the discussion. Such factors – the difficulty in accessing a venue and gathering respondents at one time and place, and selecting respondents who were

qualified to join in this focus group – meant that this focus group took a lot of time and effort to organize.

3.3.2.1.4 Participant Observation

Participant observations were used to explore and support the data collected from the interviews. It can be used ‘as the only technique or jointly with other techniques’ (Sarantakos, 1997: 207). In this case, it combines with other techniques, as participant observation can also serve as ‘a technique for verifying or nullifying data provided in face-to-face encounters’ (Hancock, 1998: 13). It also used ‘written descriptions’ as an observation technique. ‘Written descriptions’ mean that the researcher records observations of people, situations or environments and ethos in these institutions, as well as the buildings, events, activities, people and all of the life in these institutions by making notes of what the researcher observed (Hancock, 1998: 13).

In fact, this observation can be used as a justification for what I have gained from the interviews. As this research was about identity and Islamic education, it needed to know what Islamic education does, and how these institutions and women reflect their religion and Islamic education. Such accounts were important for ascertaining the depth to which the groups studied practise Islam and in terms of their knowledge about Islam.

3.3.2.2 Secondary Data

Within this study I conducted a survey that included questions relating to issues from written materials about being a Muslim woman, Muslim identity and about Islamic education. These issues are obtained from traditional research sources, such as

journals, unpublished theses and dissertations, conference and seminar papers, magazines, books, policy speeches and official government documents. In order to strengthen the structure and discourse of debates in this study, data was also obtained from several national and international newspapers, as well as from other popular publications related to young people, such as blogs and websites. Publications, research and survey results from related agencies, such as the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE), the Association of Muslim School (AMS), Islamic Curriculum Division, Ministry of Education, Department of Islamic Development Malaysia or Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) Census and other related departments were also extensively consult. Secondary analysis provided room for further understanding of explanatory elements through existing data from primary sources. Hakim (1982: 1) defines secondary analysis 'as any further analysis of an existing dataset that presents interpretations, conclusions or knowledge additional to, or different from, those presented in the first report on the inquiry as a whole and its main results'.

3.4 Data Analysis

This study employed a variety of analytic strategies that involved sorting, organizing and reducing the data, as well as assembling and interpreting it (Hashim, 2006: 176). The first major step in analyzing the data was to organize the materials so that portions of the data could be readily retrieved. The analysis of the data began with transcribing interviews and observation notes. In this process, the main task was to identify the key terms, codes or themes, which meant identifying which extracts of data from the transcripts and field notes were informative, and sorting out the important messages from each interview and observation. It enabled me to identify

common sequences and patterns and discrete differences in the data in relation to the themes determined by the research questions. In addition, I also can indicate ‘where there is most success and failure’ throughout the fieldwork (McLoughlin, 1997: 118).

A category system was then developed through reading a portion of the data, and the content of the database was coded into different concepts to identify any recurring themes, phenomena or experiences within the discussions. The coded data was then placed into particular files corresponding to each of the topics covered in the coding scheme. All of these codes were also used to pick out different groups of respondents, such as leaders, teachers and students. This enabled me to retrieve any information from the study by going to a single file and using a suitable quotation for the issues discussed in the chapters.

3.5 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues frequently arise in qualitative research. Throughout the fieldwork, respondents and institutions were given the information sheet and informed consent was secured before any interview was undertaken. To make sure the consent was informed, participants were given information about the nature of the research and the possible impacts it could have on them, so that they could make an autonomous choice about whether or not to be involved in the study. Respondents were given complete freedom to think about their involvement before committing themselves, and before times and places were arranged for interviews. The participants contained a mixture of targeted recruits, randomly selected individuals and volunteers. All participants had the right to withdraw at any time they chose, and only those who granted consent were enrolled. As for the students, I had to seek advice from the head

teacher before having contact with them. Even though this research is low risk, I also needed to comply with guidelines that required explicit consent from parents (see appendix v) before their children could be enrolled, as well as explicit consent from the students themselves. This required parents to sign a consent form giving permission for their children to be enrolled, which included an explicit option, and also giving permission for audio recording. After I received parental consent, the students were given a written information sheet that discussed what informed consent involves.

Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were prominent in my research project especially the NHCS's respondents. However, for the MM, the respondents have agreed to use their real names. All the NHCS participants' contributions will remain anonymous except for the leaders of NHCS institution. Thus, all the teachers' and students' names were given pseudonyms. Participants were referred to by pseudonyms that they chose, and which do not contain identifiers that make them traceable to individual participants. Necessary information for participants about confidentiality and anonymization procedures are given in the information sheet under number 6 (see appendix iii).

There were certain benefits, too, for respondents in this research, in the sense that Muslim students in a non-Muslim country may gain indirect psychological benefits from sharing ideas and experiences with an ethical researcher of Muslim origin who is keen to listen to their views. These students' experiences will also help further research on Islamic education, Muslim women's education, and Muslim women identity in general. A further future benefit arises from the fact that the research

findings may provide valuable information to policy makers who are keen to receive feedback on Muslim women's opinions about the provision of Islamic education in Malaysia and the United Kingdom, the importance of Muslim identity formation in both countries or help formulate new and effective policies regarding Muslim women's education and the Muslim community.

The participants were not exposed to any harm to their well-being, apart from the possibility that they will deal with some issues arising from the narration and sharing of sensitive personal experiences as Muslim students in a non-Muslim country. But, as noted, such material was anonymized.

All voice recordings and texts collected via fieldwork research were stored securely in manual files on pass-warded personal laptop – in order to prevent unauthorized access or dissemination of the information.

3.6 Limitations

The initial research proposal was about Islamic schools in Leeds/Bradford (independent and state funded). In the United Kingdom, it was very hard to get access to Muslim schools as the current political climate has led them to be extra careful with outsiders. As a consequence, the research topic has changed to the dimension of Islamic education at only one Muslim school in Kedah and Leeds. The failure to gain access to Muslim schools in the UK has a number of possible explanations. One is my ethnicity and background, which were unfamiliar to them despite the widespread rhetoric of Islamic universalism. Another is that media prejudice, especially after 9/11 and 7/7, has led many schools to be extra careful and vigilant in protecting themselves

from the ‘other’. In an article entitled *(Not) Accessing Deobandi dar ul-Ulum in Britain*, Gilliat-Ray (2005) shared her experiences of attempting to access this institution, which was suspicious not towards the media *per se* but towards ‘the other’ more generally (Gilliat-Ray, 2005). She wrote:

There is considerable, but unfounded suspicion in *dar ul-ulum* towards wider British society. Much media coverage is extremely negative. The more that institutions isolate themselves, the more suspicion is created. Opening the door to qualified, independent, responsible academics is the beginning of dispelling myths and breaking down prejudice. The current Islamophobic climate is exactly the time in which *dār ul-ulum* should welcome sensitively-conducted research that is actively looking for good practice, positive stories, and examples of successful training (Gilliat-Ray, 2005: 16).

The language barrier also presented a limitation when, as noted above, this research dealt with British-Pakistani-born children in Leeds, who spoke with Yorkshire mix Pakistani- accent. However, these girls answered the interview questions in a very slow intonation with the help of sign language. Although ‘misunderstanding and error are obviously possible in every interview situation, it is alleged that the risk is increased when there are substantial cultural differences between the researcher and the interviewee’ (Tinker, 2006: 97).

3.7 Researcher Bias and Reflexivity

It is generally accepted that I have an effect on the data that is collected: ‘The characteristics of the researcher can have an impact on all the stages of the research process, including access to the interviewees, the responses received and how those responses are interpreted’ (Tinker, 2006: 93). Tinker, in her research on *State Funded*

Muslim Schools? Equality, Identity and Community in Multifaith Britain, stated that reflexivity provides a good way for the researcher to manage the impact of bias.

As I grew up in a Muslim country, and as people are always seeking Islamic education, it is easy for me to understand the dilemmas a Muslim community in this country faces when there is a lack of mainstream Islamic educational provision. From these case studies I could see that most of the Muslim community in Leeds seeks this type of education for their children within the United Kingdom. It is believed that this view can be generalized to other Muslim communities from different countries as well (Hefner & Zaman, 2007).

It is with this thought in mind that, in this section, I will reflect on the significance of a non-Pakistani Malaysian who, in my late thirties, carried out participant-observation and interviews on ethnicized and racialized minorities in contemporary Britain. As a consequence of the difficulty of obtaining access to Muslim schools, I became nervous the first time I went to NHCS. I also harboured certain preconceptions about what they would be like, expecting the atmosphere to be unfamiliar, reverent and perhaps a little severe. Therefore, 'the suggestion that "outsider" researchers might hold preconceptions and stereotypes about other cultures may be right' (Tinker, 2006: 98-99).

Indeed, during the fieldwork at this institution, I started to think about the notion of 'the self' and 'the other', how I would react to 'the other', and how to achieve mutual respect between 'the self' and 'the other', and how 'the self' might co-operate with 'the other' during fieldwork (McLoughlin, 1997: 139). For example, as an outsider

with a different background in these institutions, I experienced a mixture of similarities and differences – familiarity with the issues and discussions, but a lack of familiarity in terms of the different contexts. As McLoughlin (2000: 26) states:

I considered the importance of how I was positioned vis-à-vis my respondents with respect to the partial connections I was able and unable to make with them during my time at the field sites.

During fieldwork at this school, I usually introduced myself to the respondents as a PhD student with an interest in Muslim women's education and identity in Britain – both very much 'outsider' categories according to McLoughlin (2000). Nevertheless, according to Shah (2004), 'cross-cultural' or 'outsider' research is inferior to 'insider' research. When I conducted interviews with 'elite interviewees', such as the governors, head teachers and teachers, I felt that I was the less powerful party within the interaction because of their position (Puwar, 1997). Therefore, when I dealt with them, I categorised myself as an insider as a result of my religious orientation and academic background, given that I gained my Master's degree at an Islamic university in Malaysia. Somehow, I did not feel comfortable about sharing my personal academic background, but I found that by doing so, the respondents started to provide more in-depth and detailed data. As McLoughlin (2000: 25) says, 'not all ethnographers who have written about the Muslim presence in Britain mention the role of their own subjectivity in their work', but those who 'do have added an important dimension to their studies in terms of contextualizing the way in which knowledge is negotiated between the observer and the observed, the outsider and the insider'.

However, whilst conducting this research, my identity as a non-British Muslim was sometimes an advantage. I was surprised to discover that all of these students knew about my presence on my first day. In fact, I was told that I had become one of the subjects of their conversations. Indeed, everybody was eager to know about me and who I was. Some of them thought that I was a visitor, whilst others thought I was a staff there. The fact that I had a different ethnicity was probably what drove them to find out about me and was interested in finding out about my background. This provided me with an advantage in terms of building relationships.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified the main qualitative methodological techniques that I employed to collect my data for this research – much of which are written up in the two case studies that follow – providing the background to and discussing the issues surrounding performing semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant observations at the field sites. In the next chapter I will present the case studies on Islamic schools and Muslim students' identity, starting with Maktab Mahmud in Kedah and followed by the New Horizon Community School (NHCS).

CHAPTER FOUR

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

4.1 Introduction

This aim of this chapter is to illustrate the development of Islamic education both in Malaysia and the United Kingdom. I begin by mapping out the development of Islamic education in general, and in Malaysia and Britain in particular. In the following sections I will discuss the provision of Islamic education provided by the local Muslim institutions. I then address the issues that Muslim girls and women have with Islamic education in Malaysia and Britain, as much of the literature argues that they receive little opportunity in this regard because of cultural and traditional restrictions. I will describe typical attitudes to Muslim women's education before and after modernity, and this will then lead to an analysis of the various concerns and challenges facing Muslim women in Malaysia and Britain today.

4.2 The Development of Islamic Education

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), before his *hijrah* or migration from Makkah to Madinah, secretly taught his companions the *Quran* and the basis of Islam in the *Dar Al-Arqam* – considered to be the first Muslim school (Al-Oadah, 1998: 79). After the *hijrah*, he established a mosque called Masjid-ul An- Nabawi which played an important role as a place for worship, administration, education, social activities and as the first place at which the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught Islam publicly (Al-Oadah, 1998: 79; Rukhaiyah, 2005). Over succeeding centuries, thousands of mosques were built in every city and village of the Muslim world across the Middle

East, South / South-East Asia and Africa. Historically, some mosques were considered as universities because of the gathering of expert *ulama'* there. These *ulama'* offered Islamic education to students free of charge for the sake of Allah, and a large number of students graduated from these institutions. However, the mosques became insufficient for accommodating the increasing needs of students, and new establishments started to appear to meet these demands, called *madrasahs* (Al-Oadah, 1998, Hefner, 2007).

An institution called the *Kuttab* was also formed in Islam's early history and was where the children of the community learned and memorised the *Quran* and learned how to read and write. Enrolment in the local *Kuttab* was very common, and they often operated an open-door policy, especially in cities. Some *Kuttabs* accommodated thousands of children. Children who finished their primary education in *Kuttabs* would pass on to the *Maktab*, which accommodated them for several years before a privileged few then had the opportunity to join the mosque (Al-Oadah, 1998).

Al-Oadah (1998; cf Makdisi, 1981), explains in details the term *madrasahs* from the periods of Fatimid, Seljuk, Zinged and Ayyubid in which each period has different approach in terms of aims and objectives of its establishment. However, Al-Oadah highlights some general view behind the establishment of *madrasahs* with particular reference to the Fifth and Sixth Centuries as:

- 'A revival of *Sunni* thought to resist the spread of the *Shiite* order;
- To create a *corps* of qualified *Sunni teachers*, to teach and spread its orthodox disciplines throughout the Islamic territories;

- To create a generation of educated and loyal officers, to run the political and administrative apparatus of the *Sunni* states' (Al-Oadah, 1998:179).

Therefore, the *madrasahs* 'curriculum was very close to the religious aspirations expressed by the *Sunni* order because the very emergence of the *Madrasah* institution reflected the need to preserve orthodoxy and the political and social order' (Al-Oadah, 1998: 179).

In the 19th Century, under the secularization and colonisation of globalised modernity in the Muslim world, the importance of *madrasahs* as the main site for advanced religious education in the Muslim world gradually started to decrease (cf. Eickelman 1992; Mottahedeh 1985). For example, the *madrasah* system was abolished in Turkey in 1923, during Mustafa Kemal's period, and religious educational instruction was eliminated from public education (Hefner, 2007). Kemal reversed most of Sultan Abdulhamid's reforms, but in 1948, ten years after Kemal's death, the state reintroduced religious education into its schools, and allowed higher religious education back into public education (Hefner, 2007).

In Egypt, India, Singapore and Malaysia, British control in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not extend to the provision of a good education to these countries' general population. In Malaysia for example, British established The Malay College (1905) in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, The Malacca Malay College in Malacca (1900-1921) and Sultan Idris Training College in Perak (1920s) for the sons of royalty and aristocracy families. These schools existed for the training of Malay boys for admission to certain branches of the government services (Loh, 1971;

Andaya& Andaya 1982; Shukri, 2011). On the other hand, for the ordinary families, the British had established modern vernacular schools for each ethnicity; Malays, Chinese and Indians. The existence of these schools was a challenge for Muslim educational institutions and *ulama'* in the sense that these schools promised a bright future for employment. What happened to the *pondok* system? Were these British schools affecting the *pondok* system? What are the initiatives done by the *ulama'* in order to maintain the glory of *pondok* system? All of these questions, will be discussed in the following sections.

4.3 The Development of Islamic Education in Malaysia

At the early stage, Muslim scholars in Malaysia built *pondok* in order to impart knowledge of the foundation of Islam and its religious practices to the people. Physically, *pondoks* were built like sheds, with pillars made of palm tree, bamboo walls, thatched roofs, and wooden furniture. The first *pondok* in Kelantan was Pondok Tok Pulai Chondong, established in 1820. Many Muslim scholars such as Ahmad Jelani (1989), Madmard (1999), Azmi (1993), Ishak (1995), Rosnani (2004), Tamuri (2004) and Shukri (2011) have discussed the origin of *pondok* institutions in Malaysia, whether it originated from Sumatera in Indonesia or Patani in southern Thailand. *Pondok* system was used to open door to Muslims of all ages as long as they were interested to learn about Islam.

According to Shukri (2011), in *pondok* or *madrasah*, the *ulama'* has emphasized on three aims and objectives as a preparation to face a new challenge of 21th century arena, first; to produce *ulama'* who could become a master, an expert and a knowledgeable scholar, second; to produce *ulama'* who practice the knowledge and

finally; to produce *ulama'* who can correct the deviation of knowledge into Islamic reference. He asserted that in order to achieve those aims, one should master the '*ilm alat*' (knowledge tools) such as language knowledge like *Sarf* and *Nahw* (grammar). In addition to Arabic language and grammar, the students were also taught other subjects based on revealed knowledge such as *Tafsir* (interpretation), *Tawhid* (the concept of the unity of God), *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), *Hadith* (tradition), *Tasawwuf* (*sufi* science) and *Mantiq* (logic). All of these subjects⁸ were blended together to produce a knowledgeable and pious student.

Importantly, the *pondok* system seemingly succeeded as the best approach to inculcate Islamic values and Islamic awareness among people. It had influenced a lifestyle of Malays for many generations by constantly providing a powerful moral concern that maintained order in society until the present day. Through the teaching of Islamic education, the students' *shaksiyah* was developed so they would become role models to the local community. In fact, the students' *shaksiyah* was developed based on five concepts. They are *tarbiyyah*⁹, *ta'lim*¹⁰, *ta'dib*¹¹, *irsyad*¹² and *tadris*¹³ (El-Muhammady, 1997; Shukri, 2011).

⁸ All these subjects had been taught by using lecturing method and memorization. Students would normally place themselves on the floor, crosslegged around the *tok guru* (teacher) in a *halaqah* (circle). They used *kitab*s (textbooks) during lessons where they needed to read it sentence by educational institution (Madmarn, 1990 & 1999; Rosnani, 1994; Rukhaiyah, 2005).

⁹ *Tarbiyah* comes from the root word *raba* (to grow, to increase, to rear, spiritual nurturing), which implies a state of ethical and spiritual nurturing in developing the individuals potential and guidance of the child to the state of complete maturity

¹⁰ *Ta'lim* stems from the root word of '*alima* (to know, to be informed, to perceive, to learn, to discern), this refers to knowledge, the imparting and receiving of it through instruction and teaching

¹¹ *Ta'dib* is derived from the root word *adaba* (to be refined, disciplined, cultured, well mannered), which suggests the social aspects of a human being including the process of character development and good social behavior

¹² To show, to guide

¹³ to study, to research, to look into.

Nevertheless, there is a crucial issue concerning the relevance of the *pondok* system to the needs of society. For example, disciplines like Mathematics and Sciences were not introduced in *pondoks* and only traditional styles of teaching were incorporated to it, which in turn, ended up with no attention from governments from colonial times onward. Many Malays parents chose the state schools in schooling their children. Moreover, the existence of Razak Report (1956) and Rahman Talib Report (1960) had supported the idea of students' enrolment at state schools. The First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970), The Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975) and The Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980) had implemented a new systematic education policy and strategy to ensure that the state schools' students were guaranteed to have market in the job employment (Mohammad Ali, 1981; Shukri, 2011).

As a result, the *pondok* system has been denied the opportunity of becoming the backbone of the present state system. Mostly, the graduates of *pondok* schools found it very hard to place themselves in the competitive job market in the country because such system failed to equip students with needed skills and potentials. Moreover, after the completion of their studies, they worked as *bilal* or *muezzin* (a person who call for prayer), and *imam* (leader of prayer).

From the 1918 onwards, the enrolment of students to *pondoks* had started to decline, for the *pondok* education was considered narrow and its curricular contents merely limited to *fard ain* (personal religious obligation). In addition, Muslim intellectuals educated from the West have argued that *pondok* education did not prepare Muslim youths for socio- economic changes that were taking place or for employment in the British government services and commercial sectors. Eventually, Kaum Muda

(Progressive Faction) established modern religious schools where secular subjects such as Geography, Mathematics and Science were taught additionally in religious subjects, which are known as *madrasah*. Sheikh Ahmad founded the first *madrasah* named Madrasah Al- Hadi, in Malacca, Malaysia (Rosnani, 2004). After the Second World War, the number of students in *madrasahs* increased; more *madrasahs* were built. Thus, this period was known as the golden age of the *madrasah* education. The *madrasah* education system was more systematic and efficient than *pondok* education. It helped to strengthen the intellectual and traditional scholarship to meet the challenges of Christianity and Western culture. However, during the 1960s, these *madrasah* institutions had faced more problems because of shortage of teachers and lack of enrolments; this is because British had intervened and introduced secular and modern system of education. In fact, before the British, *pondoks* and *madrasahs* were regarded as important educational institutions. After Independence, however, these types of schools did not prepare the Muslim students to meet the contemporary requirement (Rosnani Hashim, 2004).

In the early 1970s, Islamic education received a new lease of life. The Malaysian Ministry of Education had set up the Islamic Education Division to oversee the development of Islamic education in national schools. After the First World Muslim Conference at Jeddah in 1977, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia took the initiatives to overcome this problem in the postcolonial period by establishing National Secondary Religious Schools (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama, SMKA) to fulfil contemporary requirements and to provide Malay students with the opportunity to study within an integrated educational system in which both modern subjects and Islamic subjects were taught, and thus to improve the religious education

system (Rukhaiyah, 2005). The syllabus of religious schools was then reviewed and upgraded by the Ministry of Education. The progress of this system of education has appeared better than the previous religious education because students of religious schools were allowed and able to sit for the Lower Certificate of Education (Penilaian Menengah Rendah, PMR), Malaysian Certificate of Education (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia, SPM) and Malaysian Higher Certificate of Education (Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia, STPM) examinations, in which the medium of instruction is the Malay language. Generally, the government through the Islamic Education Division has done a great effort in promoting Islamic education in the country. In fact, SMKAs were capable in producing Muslim experts in various professions who subsequently helped to improve the Muslim social mobility (Rukhaiyah, 2005).

4.4 The Coming of Islam to Kedah

Kedah was one of the eldest countries that had close relations with Muslim Middle Eastern States which had begun long before the emergence of Islam (Braddell, 1958). Some scholars put the date at the 2nd century A.D. The relationship became more active during the Omayyad Caliphate, which was based in Damascus. R. Braddell claimed that Kedah has existed at no later than the 4th century AD. He said that:

among the Malay States, only Kedah alone can produce a range of evidence to prove the continued placement of the IV century BC till the Kedah Malays embraced Islam in the XV century".

Al- Attas claimed that Islam had arrived¹⁴ in Kedah in the 9th century A.D. and some of its local population had already embraced the religion. Dr. Syed Naguib al-Attas made the following assumption:

"After the Muslims had formed a large settlement in Canton (ever since the first century Hegira or the 7th century A.D.), they were free to practice their own religion and to execute their own civil laws, it would therefore easy to assume that they would continue the practice in their new settlement in Kedah and Palembang, after their migration from Canton. The migration could be the first indication of the coming of Islam into the Malay Archipelago (Nusantara)." (Syed Naguib al-attas, 1969: 11).

Buyung (1980), Ahmad Jelani (1989), Ismail (1996) and Shukri (2011) argued that Kedah Malay community embraced Islam in the 15th century A.D or 513H/1136 M, through an *ulama'* from Yaman named Sheikh Abdullah bin Sheikh Ahmad bin Syeikh Qaumiri. However, there is no definite evidence of the exact dates of the coming of Islam in Kedah. Dato' Wan, a historian from Kedah, claims that Sheikh Abdullah spread the teaching of Islam to the people of Kedah and the 8th King of Kedah, Merong Mahawangsa, who later changed his name to Sultan Muzaffar Shah (1136-1179). Upon his conversion to Islam, the King acted by destroying all traces of Hinduism and Buddhism found in the State. In the same year (1136), Sheikh Abdullah named Kedah as Darul Aman (Ahmad Jelani, 1989; Ismail, 1996).

Al- Attas (1986) claims that Kedah community in the 15th century did not understand and practice the Islamic teaching in their daily life. They still practiced the Hinduism

¹⁴ Islam spread in two ways: one through religious or holy wars and the other is by persuading other people that Islam is the best way of life for them. The second way was used in Kedah. Muslim merchants had spread their religion along their trade routes, from Damascus to Peking and in the same way, Islam had been established along sea routes, from Jeddah to Palembang and on to the rest of the "Nusantara". Islam was absorbed into the Malay community in ports long before it made its appearance in the palace (Ismail, 2002).

until the Aceh came to Kedah. The reason Aceh came to Kedah was to bring the true Islamic teaching to the Kedah community (Shukri, 2011). The effort of al- Raniri to send *kitab*s on the basic foundation of Islam, Islamic *syariah*; *ibadah* and *munakahat* (marriage) such as the *kitab*s of *Sirat al- Mustaqim* and *Bab al-Nikah* in the 1640s had helped the Muslim community in Kedah to understand the true teaching of Islam.

Later, in 1078, *Undang- Undang Kedah* (the Law of Kedah) which included the Islamic aspects in a formal way was written. Therefore, the *Undang- Undang Kedah* contributed to the development of Islam in Kedah (Sharifah Zaleha, 1985; Shukri, 2011). The changes in religious practice in Kedah was the turning point to the development of Islamic educational provisions and institutions to serve Islamic education to the community (Sharifah Zaleha, 1985; Ahmad Jelani, 1989; Shukri, 2011).

4.5 The Development of Islamic Education in Kedah

In relation to the emergence of Islam in Kedah, the Islamic education had begun to flourish. Ramli Awang (2006) argues that the earliest Islamic education has begun at the sea side as many Arab traders had established their houses at the sea side. From then, the emergence of Islam took place and the *dakwah* started to attract people to Islam. After the conversion of Mahawangsa to Islam, Islamic education emerged, and the provision of Islamic education gradually flourished. According to Fauziah Shafie (2001), Islamic education had started gradually from the palace, to the *Tok Guru*'s house then to the mosque or *musolla* and *pondok*.

4.5.1 Pondok

Due to the high demand from the Muslim population for Islamic education, in 1806M, the first *pondok* was established by Haji Wan Ishak bin Wan Muhammad Hashim bin Wan Abdul Baqi in Kampung Malau. This was the earliest and the oldest *pondok* in Kedah. Unfortunately, this *pondok* was closed after Haji Wan Ishak was appointed as Mufti Negeri Kubang Pasu (Ahmad Jelani, 1989). In 1845 the Mufti re-opened the *pondok* at Kampung Pulau Pisang. The golden age of *pondok* institutions had begun in the late 19th century. There were about eight *pondoks* which were established in the 1870s (Abdullah Ishak, 1995; Fauziah Shafie, 2001; Ramli Awang, 2006). Muhammad Abu Bakar (1995) claimed that there were at least ten *pondoks* which existed in Kedah such as in Yan, Pulau Pisang and Titi Gajah.

During Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarram Shah's (1854M- 1879M) period, *pondoks* were seen as a backbone in the development of education. This institution was not open only for the local students *per se*, but it also had international student enrolment such as from Indonesia, Thailand, Singapura and Brunei (Awang Had Salleh, 1977).

In the 20th century AD, according to Ramli Awang (2006), the most popular *pondok*¹⁵ in Kedah were:

1. Pondok Kubang Bongor (Tuan Guru Haji Saad bin Ali)
2. Pondok Kubang Lubuk Kawah (Tuan Guru Haji Idris)
3. Pondok Gajah Mati, Pendang (Tuan Guru Haji Ismail Che Dol)
4. Pondok Chegar, Pendang (Tuan Guru Haji Ahmad Rabat)
5. Pondok Merbok (Tuan Guru Haji Ahmad Tampong)

¹⁵ The above *pondoks* have reached about 600 to 1200 students

6. Pondok Bukit Besar (Tuan Guru Haji Che Mat Al- Fatani)
7. Pondok Padang Lumat (Tuan Guru Haji Suhar)

4.5.2 Madrasah

Since *pondok* system was the only place for seeking Islamic education, it became an Islamic centre for Muslims. This has led to the emergence of Muslim scholars and Muslim network with the *haramayn*¹⁶ (Shukri, 2011) and Middle East. Some local Muslim scholars were influenced by the Islamic Reformist movement in the Middle East. Consequently, many *madrasahs* were built as an alternative to *pondok* system.

Among the pioneers are;

1. Madrasah al- Masriyah in 1906 (Tuan Haji Salleh Masri)
2. Madrasah al- Iqbal in 1907 (Syed Syeikh al- Hadi)
3. Madrasah al- Hadi in 1916
4. Madrasah al- Masyhoor in 1919 (Othman Bakar, 1980; Rahim Othman, 1980)

In Kedah, the integration of *pondok* and *madrasah* has been carried out for about eight decades. A modern Islamic educational system was introduced by Wan Sulaiman bin Wan Sidik (1874-1935). His intention was to spread *dakwah* through education. He believed that manner, *adab* and discipline of the students can only be developed through a systematic and formal education (Zaharah Abdullah, 1977/78) which can provide a bright future for the students. Thus, he established a school named al- Madrasah al- Hamidiah at Limbong Kapal, Kedah in 1906M (Shamsul & Azmi, 2006). Then, in 1936M, another *madrasah* called Maktab Mahmud was built.

¹⁶ *Haramayn* is the traditional Islamic appellation of the two holy cities of Islam, Makkah and Madinah.

This school was built by Tengku Mahmud at Simpang Kuala as a legacy of Madrasah al-Hamidiah (Lembaga Maktab Mahmud, 2015; Solahuddin, 2015).

Madrasah system is more modern, structured and formal as it combines two disciplines in one school system. One is revealed knowledge such as *Tauhid, Fekah, Akhlak, Quran, Tafsir, Tajwid, Tasawwuf* dan Arabic Language and the other is acquired knowledge such as *Ilmu Hisab* (Mathematic), *Ilmu Alam* (Sciences), *Tawarikh* (History), Malay Language and English (Othman Bakar, 1980, Rosnani Hashim, 1996). *Madrasah* is considered as a modern system as it has a syllabus, examination, classroom, school facilities, school organisation, and uniform, and certificate will be given to the students after graduation (Khoo Kay Kim, 1980; Sabri Hj. Said, 1983; Aziza Halim, 1987; Rosnani Hashim, 2004).

The reformation and modernisation of *pondoks* which occurred in Kedah was due to the amendment of a new law by the State Council of Kedah on 20th October 1921 to monitor the school life. This included qualified, trained and registered teachers as well as the curriculum (Ahmad Jelani 1989; Solahuddin, 2015). Therefore, many *pondoks* had registered their schools and had transformed to the *madrasah* system. Among them are:

Table 4.1: List of *Pondok* and its Transformation (Source: Solahuddin, 2015)

No	Before	After
1	Pondok Pulau Pisang	Madrasah Ishakiah
2	Pondok Gajah Mati	Madrasah Ahmadiyah
3	Pondok Haji Lah Kechik	Madrasah Makarumul Akhlak
4	Pondok Haji Hussain Langgar	Madrasah Al- Hamidiah/ SMA Raudhatul Ulum
5	Pondok Pak Man	Madrasah An- Nahdzah
6	Pondok Pak Ya	Madrasah Taufikiah Khairiah Al- Halimiah

Until today, most of the Islamic schools in Kedah, both primary and secondary (See appendix i), are registered under the Kedah Islamic Council (Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Kedah, JHEAIK).

The emergence of Muslim intellectual, modernisation and globalisation has given a significant impact to the development of Islamic education in Kedah. In fact, Kedah is not being recognised as a popular *pondok* institution *per se*, as it also has a remarkable evolvement of the Islamic education provision and institutions. Today, Kedah has a number of Islamic education institutions which begin from primary and secondary level such as Islamic schools (see appendix i), up to the tertiary level such as Islamic colleges and university. Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah International Islamic University (UniSHAMS) is the most popular Islamic university in Kedah that promotes Islamisation of knowledge.

Today, in Kedah, there are 42 Islamic Secondary schools, 12 Islamic private schools or Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR), 14 Voluntary-Aided Islamic Schools or Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK), 12 Islamic State Schools or Sekolah Agama Negeri (SMAN) and 5 National Secondary Religious Schools or Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA) (Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Kedah, JHEAIK; Solahuddin, 2015).

4.6 Maktab Mahmud (MM)

Maktab Mahmud or Al- Maahad Al- Mahmud was established on Friday, 29 Rabiul Awal 1355 H, 19th June 1936. The foundation stone was laid by DYMM Tunku Mahmud Ibni Al Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarramul Shah, Regent and President of the State Council of Kedah. Later this school was officiated by DYMM Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah (Lembaga Maktab Mahmud, 2015). Maktab Mahmud is an Islamic school under the Sultan of Kedah. This shows that this state is very concerned about the importance of Islamic education as the Islamic religion is under the power of the Sultan. Moreover, the Sultan wanted this school to be the centre for spreading Islam, the arabic language and the production of Muslim leaders and scholars (Lembaga Maktab Mahmud, 2015; Solahuddin, 2015).

Maktab Mahmud was a school for boys since its establishment until 31 December 1972. Later, on the 1st January 1973, this school has opened up its door to the girls by converting Sekolah Agama Tarbiah Islamiah at Persiaran Sultan Abdul Hamid into Maktab Mahmud Puteri (Girls). Both Maktab Mahmud for girls and boys are combined under one administration known as Lembaga Maktab Mahmud under the enactment of Lembaga Maktab Mahmud 1967. The Lembaga Maktab Mahmud is

managed by the Advisor Committees recognized by the Sultan of Kedah himself. The committee members include the State Minister as a chairman, the principal as the secretary and the *ulama* and *sheikul Islam* (A man respected for his piety or religious learning). This lembaga Maktab Mahmud is under the administration of the Department of Religious Affairs of Kedah or Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Kedah (JHEIK) (Lembaga Maktab Mahmud, 2015).

As this school has an outstanding reputation in Kedah and Malaysia, there is a high demand from parents to enrol their children in this school. Thus, Maktab Mahmud has opened several new branches and to date, there are 12 branches altogether. They are in Alor Setar, Yan, Langkawi, Kuala Nerang, Pendang, Sik, Merbok, Kota Kuala Muda, Baling, Kulim, Bandar Baharu dan Pokok Sena. The enrolment of the students is 2400 with 1800 out of them are at Maktab Mahmud Alor Setar (Lembaga Maktab Mahmud, 2015).

The curriculum at Maktab Mahmud is an integration of the national and Islamic curriculum. The Islamic curriculum is designed by the Lembaga Maktab Mahmud which is inline with the Islamic Curriculum Division, Ministry of Education and Department of Islamic Development Malaysia or Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) requirements. It includes the syllabuses, textbooks and examination. To date, Maktab Mahmud is one of the best schools in Kedah in terms of academic achievement as well as the Muslim identity formation.

As its motto is Ilmu Al- Nur, this school has produced numbers of Muslim scholars and government stakeholders. They are:-

Table 4.2: List of Muslim Scholars and Government Stakeholders Graduated from MM (Source: Lembaga Maktab Mahmud)

Name	Post
Tunku Mahmaud Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarram Shah	Founder of Maktab Mahmud, Kedah Regent and President of Advisory Council of State Government
Mejar Jeneral Dato' Seri Jamil Khir Bin Baharom	Minister in the Prime Minister's Department
Datuk Zainuddin bin Maidin	Minister of Information
Tan Sri Dato' Seri Azizan bin Abdul Razak	Menteri Besar of Kedah (2008- 2013)
Datuk Dr. Mashitah binti Ibrahim	Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Department
Dato' Haji Fadzil Mohd Noor	PAS President, Chairman of GERAK
Tan Sri Sheikh Ghazali A. Rahman	Director of Syariah Judiciary Malaysia
Datuk Dr. Ismail bin Ibrahim	Chairman of National Fatwa Council, Board of Trustees of Ibn Rusyd University, Spain.
Dr. Mohd Daud Abu Bakar	Chairman of Syariah Advisory Council of Cental Bank of Malaysia
Datuk Dr. Abdul Halim Ismail	Chairman of Bank Islam
Prof. Dr. Datuk Othman Ishak	Member of The National Fatwa Council
Datuk Paduka Di Raja Sheikh Abdul Majid Md. Noor	Recipient of the national level Tokoh Maal Hijrah Award
Sheikh Niamat Yusof	Recipient of the state of Kedah's Tokoh Maal Hijrah Award
Sheikh Roslan bin Haji Abdul Halim Al- Hafiz	Imam of the Kedah State Mosque (Masjid Zahir)
Tn. Hj Ismail bin Hashim	Champion of National Al- Quran Recital (9 times), Champion of International Al- Quran Recital (8 times)
Ustaz Wan Akashah Abdul Hamid	Renowned Muslim preacher

Table 4.2 (Continued)

Ustazah Siti Nor Bahyah Mahamood	Renowned Muslim preacher
Muhammad Zubir Ali	Artist/ composer

4.6.1 Aims and Objectives of the Maktab Mahmud

The general aim of Maktab Mahmud is to produce educated and intellectual students with good *akhlak* in accordance with the Islamic values as well as to be responsible to Islam, the race and country. Besides, its objectives are as follows: -

1. To build good *shaksiyah* in line with the Islamic values.
2. To produce students who understand and master the *Al- Quran* and *As-Sunnah, Ilm fard 'ain*, Islamic studies and the Arabic language.
3. To produce qualified and excellent students in the curriculum and co-curricular activities.
4. To build a strong Muslim identity in facing the challenges of modern contemporary society
5. To build students who have the knowledge and skills in science and technology.
6. To build students who are alert to the current society.
7. To build students' awareness on the importance of knowledge and the need to continuously seeking knowledge.

The vision of Maktab Mahmud is to be the best Islamic educational institution in Malaysia. Meanwhile, its mission is to produce students who excel and are balanced physically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and socially as well as integrated

based on Islamic law for the development of religion, nation and community through quality education and well-being.

4.7 The Coming of Islam to the United Kingdom

Muslim migration to Britain stretches back at least as far as the Elizabethan period, with the country receiving and absorbing a large number of people from other countries ever since. Most recently, immigrants from Somalia, Syria, Libya, Iraq and some Middle Eastern countries have come to Britain as refugees and asylum seekers (Abbas, 2005). However, as we have seen, it is Muslims of South Asian heritage that predominate in Britain. According to Ballard (1994), a South Asian presence in Britain can be dated back to the arrival of William of Normandy in 1066. Similarly, Visram (1986) states that Indians have had links with Europe for many centuries. Ansari (2004) insists that the influx of South Asians to Britain during the twentieth century was mainly due to colonization and the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. *Maharajahs* and *rajahs* (Indian kings) sent their princes¹⁷ to Britain for study and visited Britain themselves each year to pay respects to the sovereign and to attend formal state occasions (Visram, 1986). As it was thought that a western education offered the best credentials for participating in the running of the colonial system, the number of Indian students¹⁸ coming to study in Britain increased steadily between the 1840s and the 1930s.

¹⁷ Indian princes mixed with the upper classes in Britain, 'played polo and cricket, went to shooting parties and races, attended state balls and dances and gave extravagant presents and parties' (Visram, 1986: 169-173).

¹⁸ The first four students from India arrived in England in 1845, and soon after South Asian students could be found in London, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield and Aberystwyth (Visram, 1986: 169-173).

According to Visram (1986) and Siddiqui (1995), Muslim migration to Britain really began to increase after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The East Indian Company (EIC) had brought Indians to Britain for some time to work as *ayahs* (nannies or ladies' maids), with others working as *lascars* (sailors or merchant seaman). Some were only sojourners, but among the *lascars* and the soldiers in the early twentieth century, some did become pioneering settlers (Visram, 1986; Ansari, 2004). Indeed, between the two World Wars, Britain started to be seen as a place for 'making money'¹⁹, and growing numbers of South Asians started to come to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s as cheap labours, having been informed of the opportunities by pioneers. As Ansari (2004: 35) puts it:

There were long periods of economic growth in this period that helped to create a perception of England as a land of milk and honey, and this was an era when movement across countries was relatively free and migrants entered at will.

According to Lewis (1994), the number of migrants increased dramatically in the early 1960s for two reasons. Firstly, people migrated to pre-empt the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, which 'reinforced the pattern of migration from particular areas, villages and kinship groups within villages that had already been established before the controls' (Ali, 2006: 1). Secondly, many wives chose to join their husbands, fearing that their men had also taken British wives (Shaw 2000).

Lewis (2007: 16) suggests that this early history of migration is best seen as part of a four-phase development cycle for the majority of Muslim communities that have settled in Britain. First, pioneers of the migration process came to Britain as seamen

¹⁹ To earn enough money to improve their lives before returning home (Ballard, 1994; Geaves, 1994; Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

or soldiers and looked for different work with the intention of earning enough money to return to their homelands and improve their lives there. Then, second, came the ‘chain migration’ of generally unskilled and uneducated male workers from specific regions and villages. ‘Chain migration’ first operated within the family, then with close friends, and finally with the people who lived within the pioneer’s region. The third stage was the migration of wives and children, and the last stage comes with the emergence of a generation born and educated in Britain. Shaw (2000:38) observes:

When a man first arrived in Britain, he generally went to a place where he had relatives, friends or fellow- villagers. A brother would join a brother, a son would join his father, a nephew would join an uncle, a villager would join a member of his wider kinship group or a fellow villager; this pattern recurs again and again in migrants’ accounts of their arrival in Britain.

According to the 2001 Census, 68 per cent of the 1.6 million Muslims living in Britain at that time were from South Asia and 21.4 per cent were from North Africa, the Middle East, Central and Eastern Africa, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan (Lewis, 2007), with the rest being comprised of British White and African-Caribbean converts to Islam (4.1 per cent and 6.5 per cent respectively) (Peach, 2005). According to Moosavi (2012), Muslims are highly concentrated in the large conurbations surrounding cities like London, and Manchester, which make up around 14 per cent of the total UK population. Lewis (2007) has argued that different cities have different dynamics amongst their settlers.

London, for instance, has been the most popular place for labour migrants and asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom, as many of them are unskilled labourers who identified the capital city as having the largest job market. The background of the

Muslim community in Leicester by contrast has been strongly associated with Gujarati Indian ‘twice migrants’ from East Africa who have entrepreneurial skills and a good education as well as experience of life of diaspora; this enabled them to quickly adapt to and enrich the local economy (Lewis, 2007). Different again are Bradford’s Muslim communities who originally came mainly from rural areas such as Mirpur in Azad Kashmir. They were relatively unskilled, uneducated, and were dependent on one major industry – textiles. With the decline of the textile industry between 1960 and 1990, many of these settlers lost their jobs and turned to working in take-away restaurants and as taxi drivers, whilst some remained unemployed (Ballard, 1994; Geaves, 1994; McLoughlin, 1997; Lewis, 2007).

4.8 The Development of Islamic Education in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, Islamic education began in earnest with the arrival of the first Muslim immigrants and eventually the reuniting of their families. The majority of Muslim children were being educated in British state schools in the early 1970s (as they are to this day). However, they faced problems with the state school system in terms of the appropriateness of its curriculum, environment, ethos and Muslim teachers as role models (Halstead 2005). Therefore, many parents provided a more or less elementary Islamic education for their children at home and through mosques, only later beginning negotiations with local education authorities and other relevant bodies on the issue of creating Muslim educational institutions (Nielsen 1988; Lewis 1994). These would accommodate the religious and cultural needs of their children as the Muslim population increased in numbers, especially in areas with large Muslim populations, such as Tower Hamlets and Bradford (Parker-Jenkins, 1995: 2; Halstead, 2005).

According to Parker- Jenkins (1995), there are three types of Islamic institutions that are separate from the compulsory state education system. First, there are the supplementary schools or *madrasahs*, which are generally held at the mosques and conducted by *Imams*. This form of supplementary school is operated in the evenings and the weekends, and relies largely on community volunteers (Sarwar, 1994; Halstead, 2005; Haw, 2011). Second, there are classes run in private homes. Both of these forms of education face problems with limitations of space, the inadequacy of teaching materials and methodologies, and academic burdens on pupils as well as issues about safeguarding (Rizvi, 2007). Third, there are the primary and secondary Independent Muslim schools, which require parents to pay fees (Halstead, 2005; Rizvi, 2007). The shortcomings of these schools include an overall lack of capacity, additional financial burdens on the community and a lack of resources in terms of teaching materials, facilities and the temporary status of many of the teaching staff (Halstead, 2005).

There are also *Darul Ulums*, which generally belong to the South Asian heritage Deobandi movement in the UK, and have been successfully established in various British towns and cities. The most influential are in Bury and Dewsbury in the north of England (Geaves, 1996). The aim of these establishments is to train a new generation of British-born *ulama* who are familiar with the problems of the life of Muslim communities in Britain (Geaves, 1996; Gilliat-Ray, 2010). These schools combine national curriculum subjects with traditional Islamic religious education based on models still often taken from the Indian sub-continent (Halstead, 2005). The Barelwis are perhaps the largest or most generally influential group amongst Muslims in Britain, and even though education is not as central in their institutional life when

compared to the Deobandis, they have nonetheless created five *madrasahs*. Interestingly, two of these *madrasahs* – Eaton Hall near Nottingham, and Hijaz College in Nuneaton – have recently developed a good reputation (Geaves, 1996; Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

However, the *madrasahs* that belong to these movements are not options for ordinary Muslim parents in Britain, attracting only children whose parents are especially religious and devoted to one of these movements. The following brief sections describe significant institutions providing Islamic education in the UK.

4.8.1 The Mosque

Mosque schools or supplementary schools provide a range of educational activities for Muslim children, including language (such as Urdu or Bengali), the *Quran*, *tajweed*, and basic knowledge of Islam. Classes generally run every evening and are attended by Muslim children between five and fourteen years old. In *Quran* teaching, the teacher usually sits with his back to the wall while listening and checking students' recitations of the *Quran*. The classes separate boys and girls, who are then taught by a teacher of their own gender (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). During the teaching, the students will sit on the floor with their legs crossed and the teaching takes up to two hours per day (Cherti et al., 2011). Recent estimates suggest that there are around 250,000 Muslim children attending these schools, which operate at 2,000 places in the United Kingdom (Hayer, 2009; Abrams, 2011).

Nevertheless, there are a number of concerns with mosque-based Islamic education. First, the curriculum at mosques is limited as it places all its emphasis on *Quranic*

recitation and *tajweed*. Second, mosque education places a burden on children in the sense that it may make heavy demands on their time and energy (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Third, the pedagogy employed at mosques is dissonant with the style and methods of education that children receive at state schools, which normally stresses the importance of critical questioning of knowledge and of teachers themselves – something that is unacceptable at the mosque²⁰, where dictation and memorization are used for teaching and learning. Fourthly, the majority of teachers and *imams* in mosques do not have qualifications and training. A recent Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) survey on *madrasahs* and supplementary school indicates that over seventy-five per cent of these institutions recruit *imams* to teach (Cherti et al., 2011), and *madrasahs* sometimes depend on the help of voluntary teachers, ‘which limits the extent to which they can demand qualifications’ (Cherti et al., 2011: 47). Shadid and Koningsveld (1995) and Scourfield et al. (2013) suggested that the *imam*, in addition to being a prayer leader, could function as a teacher for children as well, but would need to contextualise the learning in order to make it relevant to young British Muslims. Thus, the mosque has been criticised for failing to disseminate a cogent understanding of the *Quran*, and not succeeding in delivering its messages to young people. Understanding the *Quran* is important for every practicing Muslim, especially those living in non-Muslim countries, who need to also understand how to contextualise it in relation to their host societies (Abrams, 2011; Cherti et al., 2011).

Moreover, there are also criticisms of the safe-guarding of children at supplementary schools, as *imams* and teachers have utilized corporal punishment. This issue has been

²⁰ However, Sahin (2009), an educationalist, looks at this phenomenon in a positive way. He argues that, these differences show the beauty and speciality of knowledge. For him, Islamic education cannot be separated from memorization and the heavy use of textbooks. Both Siddique and Sahin agree that non-active participation in the classroom is a kind of respect to the teachers.

highlighted in the media and by researchers, and may prevent some parents from sending their children to supplementary schools, as regulations on corporal punishment do not fully protect children in these schools (Singleton, 2010; Abrams, 2011; Cherti et al., 2011). The UK media exposed violence inside Muslim educational institutions in *Dispatches: Lessons in Hate and Violence* (Channel 4, 14 February 2011). A mosque in Keighley in West Yorkshire was investigated and a teacher jailed following allegations that some of the teachers in this mosque regularly assaulted young children, for example by kicking and punching them, and swearing during teaching.

My intention here is not to question different teaching methodologies, but rather to draw attention to the ways in which Islamic knowledge can be delivered in a comprehensive, contextual and interesting way. Most of the mosques around the Muslim world emphasise the recitation of the *Quran*, yet the importance of understanding, internalising and articulating the *Quran* must be taught alongside it, and this is something that is often lacking. Indeed, the new challenges of living in a non-Muslim country call out for a deeper understanding of Islamic resources so that Muslims can engage with the 'other' and build a good Muslim citizen for God and the nation. McLoughlin (2005b: 1048) argues that 'some mosques in the diaspora could be seen as re-inventing an Islamic tradition by slowly taking on a range of community functions that would be more or less unheard of in Pakistan today'. Together, these factors are often a spur to parents seeking an alternative form of Islamic education for their children, perhaps with an independent teacher.

4.8.2 Independent Muslim Schools

Even though British Muslims have a right to set up voluntary-aided Muslim schools under the education act 1944, the British government has not made the exercise of this right easy for Muslims (Dwyer 1993; McLoughlin 1998b; Halstead 2005; Tinker 2006; Meer 2007). Therefore, Muslims have largely been limited to the setting up independent Muslim schools in order to elevate their children's educational attainments within a Muslim learning environment. Many Muslim parents believe that Muslim schools offer 'the most conducive environment for their children, and [are] most likely to inculcate common values and respect for Islam' (Ansari, 2004: 326). Generally, it is claimed that the existence of Islamic schools has made a significant contribution towards parental choice in schooling, especially when this type of school provides religious foundations and perhaps a more disciplined ethos.

A number of Muslim independent schools have now been established across Britain, particularly in areas with high Muslim populations (Halstead, 2005). There are currently 172 fee-paying Islamic schools in Britain (AMS-UK, <http://ams-uk.org/muslim-schools/>. Retrieved on 26 March 2014), which are attended by approximately three per cent of the Muslim children in Britain. However, due to a lack of support from the community and the state in terms of finances, these schools often face financial problems, which have led to their inability to provide adequate facilities and teaching resources (Halstead, 2005; Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Again, it is difficult to generalise about this sector but there is often a high turnover of the teachers in Independent Muslim schools and they receive lower salaries typically as compared to state schools.

An advocate for Islamic education, Ibrahim Hewitt (1996), describes these schools as attempting to revive the spirit of Islamic education by covering all aspects of the modern syllabus from an Islamic perspective, whilst also offering pupils an Islamic curriculum consisting of Islamic studies, Arabic language, and *Quranic* Studies. At both Muslim independent and Voluntary- aided schools (VA), pupils are taught the national curriculum together with an Islamic curriculum.

Both the environment and ethos of Islamic Schools tend to differ from those of state schools in various ways. For example, the Islamic ethos is often visualised through school uniform, with students covering the *aurah* (Certain part of the body that Muslim women need to cover from others to see) inside the school. Prayer times are allocated, and these schools also recognize Muslim holidays and festivals, with homeland visits also often being accommodated (Haw, 1998). In relation to the co-curricular activities, the students are provided with Islamic societies and clubs at school, such as the Muslim Scouts. Thus, the ethos at Muslim schools tends to reinforce the cultural, linguistic and religious identities of pupils, and this is further supported by the content of teaching in many Islamic schools, which is integrated with the values and culture of Islam. Importantly, all of these aspects – curriculum, pedagogy and ethos – discussed in this following paragraph are similar to those at VA Muslim schools, although of course the offering of the latter is framed in relation to a wider conversation with the UK state.

The teaching and learning processes at Muslim educational institutions differ from that which children receive in state schools. The curriculum, pedagogy and ethos are designed in the light of the *Quran* and *Sunnah* so that the Muslim character of

children can be built into the education they receive (Parker-Jenkins, 1995; Ansari, 2004; Halstead, 2005; Gilliat-Ray, 2010). In terms of pedagogy, independent Muslim schools are more structured than supplementary schools and mosques though it is difficult to generalise, and like state schools they may encourage more two-way communication between students and teachers, with students being more likely to be encouraged to actively participate in the classroom. However, their pedagogy is quite mixed, and also varies between subjects. For instance, the teaching pedagogy and methodology of revealed knowledge (Islamic education) may be very different to that of applied knowledge. According to Siddique (2014)²¹, in theory, the methodology for applied knowledge encourages students to challenge each other and actively participate in classroom interaction, whilst the methodology for revealed knowledge in theory involves one-way communication (teacher to student), memorization and a text-centred teaching methodology. Additionally, Siddique (2014) argues that Islamic education should focus on the concepts of reasoning, investigation and *wahy* (revelation) to create a deep understanding of our ethical lives and our reasoned engagement with others. Concepts such as *wahy* do not arise in the secular education system, which is based on philosophical development and sociological understanding alone.

In terms of teacher qualifications and training, majority of Islamic schools require their teachers to have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and because they pay lower wages they are unlikely to attract the best young graduates (Cherti et al., 2011). Undoubtedly, this must have an impact on the effectiveness of the teaching and

²¹ Interview, Markfield Institute, 2 September 2013.

learning process at these schools. Indeed, many Islamic schools have received critical reports from OFSTED²² that relate to these problems.

Moreover, these schools have also been criticized for a failing to develop cross-cultural understanding and a broader knowledge of Britain, as students do not mix with students from other faiths and backgrounds in their school settings (Halstead, 2005). In an earlier period when the issue of state-funding for independent Muslim schools first began to raise its head, the Swann report ²³(1985), together with many scholars, claimed that Muslim schools encouraged segregation (see Halstead, 1986, 2005; Tinker, 2006; Haw, 2011). Halstead (1986, 2005) observes that arguments against the establishing of state-funded Muslim schools cite four main problems: Muslim schools are socially and ethically divisive; the process of religious nurture is conceptually different²⁴; they fail to promote citizenship and social cohesion; and, finally, they do not promote the development of personal autonomy.

Bleher (1996) has argued that these criticisms have led some Muslim groups and organizations to pursue social cohesion, integration and patriotism at Islamic schools. For example, many independent Muslim schools now teach national curriculum subjects such as English, Mathematics and Information Technology. Moreover, some have joined the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS), which provides professional development services for widening the range of national curriculum subjects they are

²² ²² OFSTED is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It reports directly to parliament, and 'inspects and regulates services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages. The aim of all this work is to promote improvement and value for money in the services they inspect and regulate, so that children and young people, parents and carers, adult learners and employers benefit'. (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/about-us>). (Retrieved on 3rd June 2014).

²³ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups

²⁴ The religious nurture for Muslim must be based on Islamic faith. However, the role of state schools is not to nurture any particular religious faith (Halstead, 2005: 130).

permitted to teach. Moreover, the AMS and LEAs (Local Education Authority) introduced citizenship as a national curriculum subject after the 7 July 2005 bombing, and this has been taken up by some independent Muslim schools aiming to engage young people in understanding the rights and responsibilities they have as members of society.

4.8.3 Voluntary Aided Muslim Schools

The British Muslim community started fighting for Muslim voluntary aided (VA) schools in June 1983 for Islamia School in Brent. However, their applications were systematically rejected by the state, and the issue of state funding for Islamic schools has generated more or less continual debate since the 1980s. A growing sense of injustice began to emerge within the Muslim community at that point, as Christian and Jewish schools experienced no trouble in receiving state funding. The 1994 Education Act does not stipulate that only Christian churches or groups may apply for voluntary aided status for their schools and it is through this legislation that Muslim groups first sought, and continue to seek, for their schools although since 1998 13 such schools have been established. One of the reasons that Muslims have found it difficult to set up VA schools is the state's concern that they would increase separatism and fragmentation in British society.

In her PhD thesis, Tinker (2006) debates the issue from a theoretical perspective, looking at how liberal, multicultural and communitarian perspectives are used to argue both for and against state funding for Muslim schools. She contends that liberals oppose faith schools because they believe that they damage social cohesion and cause fragmentation, whereas communitarians reject this, arguing that faith

schools in fact promote unity by giving children confidence in their own identities. Some multiculturalists advocate faith schooling, arguing that it upholds the rights of minority faith groups by giving them the same rights as majority faith communities, whilst other multiculturalists oppose faith schooling on the grounds that it inhibits dialogue between cultures and does not prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society.

The DfE (Department for Education) (formerly Department for Education and Employment) and LEAs have sometimes opposed and sometimes supported the establishment of state-funded Muslim schools in different combinations. The DfE report said long after the establishing of state-funded Muslim schools:

Voluntary aided Muslim schools will deny Muslim children the opportunities of a broad and balanced curriculum, diminish their life chances, create ghettos, isolate Muslim girls even more than they are at the moment, drop the 'standard' of education, and could create another Northern Ireland situation here (Khan Cheema, 2009: 87).

The Association of Muslim Schools²⁵ (AMS), which was established in 1992, has roundly rejected these criticisms and is lobbying for more state funding for Muslim faith schools.

In the history of the battle over Muslim state-funded schools, Islamia School in Brent provides the clearest example of the struggles that Islamic schools have faced to obtain government funding. During the 1980s and into the 1990s, its applications were repeatedly turned down – sometimes for spurious reasons, such as that there were surplus places in local schools. Unfortunately, the same reasons did not prevent

²⁵ The establishment of the AMS is to support and develop excellence in Muslim schools in the UK by providing numerous trainings, workshops, conferences and events for teachers and members of Muslim schools (AMS UK's website and Facebook). See <http://ams-uk.org/> and www.facebook.com/AMSUK/ (Retrieved on 26 April 2014).

other faith-based schools in the same geographical area achieving VA status (Parker-Jenkins, 2005). Islamia School sent a letter of enquiry to Secretary of State in 1983, followed by a formal application for voluntary aided status in 1986, which was eventually rejected in 1990. The application was again rejected in 1993. In 1995, Islamia applied again, and three years later in 1998 it was finally given VA status after fifteen years of trying under a New Labour government more hospitable to the public recognition of Islam, and was the first Muslim VA School in Britain (Parker-Jenkins, 2005; Lepkowska, 2008).

Bradford Muslim Girls School (BMGS), later renamed Feversham College, also struggled to obtain government funding for eight years, between 1986 and 1994. However, even though it obtained support from the LEA, its application for VA status was unsuccessful (McLoughlin, 1997). Initially, both Feversham College and Islamia School were designated as Grant-Maintained schools²⁶, but the Education Standards Act (1998) placed them in the voluntary aided category (Jenkins, 2005: 44).

Today, there are 13 VA Muslim schools across the United Kingdom, as shown in the table below.

²⁶ a type of school in the UK between 1988 and 1998 that received its money directly from central rather than local government.

Table 4.3: List of Voluntary Aided Muslim Schools (Source: AMS-UK, <http://ams-uk.org/muslim-schools/> . Retrieved on 26 March 2014)

School	Tier	Gender	Location
Al- Furqan Primary School	Primary	Mixed	Birmingham
Al- Hijrah Primary School	Primary	Mixed	Birmingham
Al- Hijrah Secondary School	Secondary	Mixed	Birmingham
Bolton Muslim Girls' School	Secondary	Girls	Bolton
Feversham College	Secondary	Girls	Bradford
Gatton Primary School	Primary	Mixed	Tooting, London
Iqra Primary School	Primary	Mixed	Clapham, London
Iqra Slough Islamic Primary School	Primary	Mixed	Slough
Islamia Primary School	Primary	Mixed	Brent, London
Madani High School	Secondary	Mixed	Leicester
Orchard Primary School	Primary	Mixed	Lambeth, London
Preston Muslim Girls' High School	Secondary	Girls	Preston
Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School	Secondary	Girls	Blackburn

The establishment of VA Muslim schools is 'seen to be of symbolic significance as a demonstration that British Muslims have the legal right to a distinctive form of education alongside other faith communities in Britain' (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 151). Hence, under the entitlement of Education Acts 1944, 1988 and 1994, schools with a large majority of Muslim children can apply to be re-established as Muslim voluntary aided schools or state funded schools if the school reaches the national standard of

British schooling. According to Halstead (2005), less than 0.5 per cent of Muslim children are currently educated in state-funded Islamic schools. Indeed, historically, it was unclear how widespread the desire for Islamic schools amongst Muslim parents, although now that it is free to attend, schools such as Feversham College in Bradford are oversubscribed. However, despite significant expansion, such schools serve no more than a tiny minority of Muslim pupils and are not available in many areas (Ansari, 2004).

4.9 The Development of Islam Education in Chapeltown, Leeds

Muslim migration to Chapeltown began to occur in 1981 as a result of the high density of the Muslim population in the University ward and Little London by this time. The Muslim population began to spread out from these areas to the wards that Indians (especially Sikhs) were vacating, particularly in Chapel Allerton and Harehills (Geaves, 1996). Like other South Asian settlement in Britain, most Muslim migrants came to Leeds from a variety of backgrounds. Farrar (2002: 74) claims that ‘although some of the original migrants from East Pakistan [Bangladesh] have established themselves in business and professions’ in Chapeltown, some of the more recent migrants have arrived there with academic qualifications and expertise. He also added that most of these in-flows happened in the mid-to-late 1970s, when these migrants obtained work in ‘the already declining engineering and textile industries’ (Farrar, 2002: 74). According to Knott, et. al., (1994), Geaves (1996) and Fotiou et al. (2007), among the earliest Muslim migrants to Leeds were Chaudri Bostan Khan²⁷, P.

²⁷ Chaudri Bostan Khan, from Mirpur, arrived in Leeds in 1946 as a businessman. In 1948, he married a converted English woman. Khan’s success inspired his relatives and friends to come to England. He liaised with the authorities, dealt with immigration and he also provided his countrymen with employment and housing. Before he died, he was the President of the Leeds Islamic Centre (Geaves, 1996: 3).

J. Shah²⁸, Ahmad Shuttari²⁹ and Mofizur Rahman³⁰. At this stage the Muslim community was characterised by ethnic fusion. In Chapeltown, for instance, Mofizur Rahman encouraged Bengali Muslims to raise money to buy an old synagogue at 21 Leopold Street in the late 1950s. A mosque named Jinnah Mosque finally opened in 1960, with joint trustees from the Bengali and West Pakistani communities (Geaves, 1996: 9-11).

According to Geaves (1996), the Bengali community seems to have sparked the first inception of Islam in Chapeltown. In fact, Bengal has a strong tradition of Islam's reformists, with many Bengali Muslims being influenced by the work of nineteenth century reformers such as Karamat Ali (d. 1873), Titu Mir (1782-1831) and Haji Shariatullah (1781-1840).

Between 1960 and 1970, this local Muslim community started to separate into Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. According to Geaves, the factors that led to this were language (as the *khutbah* is spoken in the language of the congregation); the community recruitment of *Imams* from Mirpur, Sylhet and other parts of East Pakistan; and the echo of the political situation between East and West Pakistan

28 P.G.J Shah from Punjab settled in Leeds in 1953. He studied engineering in London in 1933. He considered himself as a part of the Indian tradition of liberal Islam, and was the Chairman of the Islamic Centre from its foundation up to 1986 (Geaves, 1996: 4-5).

29 Ahmad Shuttari arrived in Leeds to study. He became a school teacher at Batley High School after leaving Leeds University. He was well versed in his religion, and became very influential in the development of Islam in Leeds (Geaves, 1996: 6).

30 Mofizur Rahman was born in Noakhali, Bengal. He moved to Calcutta at age nine. In 1939, he joined the Indian Army after being inspired by his uncle, who was a police sergeant. At the age of sixteen, he left India on the SS City of Bombay bound for Canada, and found himself in a Glasgow seamen's boarding house in 1942. With the help of the Indian National Congress Party, he travelled to London and reached Leeds in the 1940s (Geaves, 1996: 4).

which led to a civil war in 1971 (Geaves, 1996; Farrar, 2002). Political tendencies were evident, for instance, when Mofizur Rahman formed the East Pakistan Association in 1968, which soon became the Bangladeshi Association, echoing Bangladesh's independence movement. This situation impacted on the Jinnah Mosque, leaving the West Pakistanis in complete control of it (Geaves, 1996; Farrar, 2002).

Farrar (2002: 71) argues that there were other sources of separation among Muslims, deriving 'from differences in the interpretation of Islamic theology', with most Leeds' Muslims following 'the *Sunni* tradition rather than the competing *Shi'a* tradition'. However, among South Asian *Sunnis*, there are two major schools of thought – the Deobandi and Barelwi. The Deobandi or reform school of thought is 'based on a strict interpretation of the *Quran*', whilst the Barelwi is based on '*Sufi* practices of meditation, devotional music and ecstatic poetry, influenced by Hindu mysticism' (Farrar, 2002: 71; cf. Metcalf 1989; Sanyal 1996; McLoughlin, 2008). Though the Barelwis and Deobandis emerged during the nineteenth century in India, both reform movements have exercised strong influence over Muslims in contemporary Britain (Lewis, 1994; McLoughlin, 2008). In Chapeltown, 'many Bangladeshis follow the Barelwi tradition, but the founders of the Jinnah Mosque, from both East and West Pakistan, followed Deobandi theology and practices' (Farrar, 2002: 71). However, the theology and practices of the Jinnah Mosque's founders contradicted that of the local and national Bangladeshi communities³¹. Hence, Farrar observes that 'shared nationality [does not] imply shared interpretation of Islam' (Farrar, 2002: 71).

³¹ Some of the Bengali community also split off from the Deobandi Jinnah Mosque to found their own Barelwi mosque (Shah Jalal Mosque) in Harehills (Geaves, 1996; Farrar, 2002).

The fission of the Muslim population in Chapeltown thus commenced in 1981, when the Pakistan Muslim Association established the Islamic Centre in Spencer Place. The existence of this Islamic centre and central mosque meant that ‘the Jinnah Mosque was eventually sold back to the Bangladeshis who were sympathetic to reform ideals’ (Geaves, 1996: 13). The Bangladeshis then renamed the Jinnah Mosque the ‘Al-Ameen’ Mosque – which belongs to the Bangladeshi Deobandi tradition, while the Islamic Centre Mosque belongs to Pakistani Deobandis³² (Geaves, 1996; Farrar, 2002).

The Deobandi Islamic Centre³³ in Chapeltown was opened to accommodate the Muslim community for prayers, and to provide Islamic education for the Muslim community, and for Pakistanis in particular (Geaves, 1996). The Deobandis³⁴ also place ‘emphasis upon scholarly learning’, and thus the best recognized Deobandi institutions are the *Darul Ulum*, or Islamic seminaries, established at Bury in the north of England (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 87). Birt (2005) suggests that the emphasis the Deobandi movement places on education is grounded in the fact that Muslims are brought into the educational system at an early age. Since the Deobandis view education³⁵ as fundamental to their practice and philosophy, and Yorkshire is the most popular place for Deobandi *Madrasah*³⁶.

³² Shaw (1988) argues that the struggle between the Deobandi and Barelwi movements has largely played out over the control of mosque because they play “a large part in Muslims’ social and political organisations as well as religious functions in the diaspora, both locally and transnationally” (McLoughlin, 2005b, 1046).

³³ This centre has also become a place for Tabligh-al Jamaat, a *da’wah* movement related to the Deobandis that employs ‘door-to-door preaching and a strict Sufi- inspired ethos of self- discipline and service among its members’ (Gilliat- Ray, 2010: 89)

³⁴ However, according to Gilliat-Ray (2010), the Deobandis were the pioneers of the mosques in the 1960s and 1970s, and have successfully established a network of mosques in many British towns and cities until the present today.

³⁵ The Deobandi system of education for young Muslims is clearly well organized, relying upon a carefully constructed curriculum.

³⁶ For example at Dewsbury

4.10 New Horizon Community School (NHCS)

New Horizon Community School (formerly Leeds Islamia Girls' School) is the first Leeds's community Islamic girls school since 1994. Historically, it was run at the Islamic Centre, Spencer Place, Chapeltown, one of the earliest mosques to be established in Leeds.

Founded in 1981, this mosque is now controlled by Pakistanis and, as noted above, serves as a centre for the activities of the sober Islamic revivalist movements from South Asia – the Deobandis and Tablighi Jamaat. As noted earlier, the educational-approach of the Deobandi movement ran in parallel with the effort of establishing the Leeds Islamic Girls' School in the Islamic Centre Mosque. Indeed, the driving force behind the proposal to open this school came from those 'inside' the mosque and on its committee. The aims of those involved in setting up the school were to provide a national and Islamic curriculum for girls with an Islamic environment and ethos, and to provide their daughters with single-sex schooling.

Thus, gender, religion and culture were the main factors involved in establishing this school. In the past, Muslim women were discriminated from education and the majority of the traditionalists (from South Asia) viewed female education as challenging the notion of *izzat* and *sharam*³⁷ (Lewis, 1994; Haw, 1998, 2011; Jawad, 2003; Ansari, 2004). Due to the generational change, civilization and modernization, Muslim parents became aware about the importance of education for their daughters. Thus, Shah (1998) perceives single-sex schooling to exist because of 'the nexus of socio- cultural and political manoeuvres bound up with colonialism and reinforced by

³⁷ As I explained in Chapter One.

the active and effective traditions within subcultures as well as the religious Islamic discourses' (see Haw, 1998: 164 - 165).

Leeds Islamia Girls School had only a few pupils when it opened in 1994, but the numbers continued to grow rapidly until 2000, at which point it moved to the border of Chapel Allerton to cater for new enrolments, as well as to secure better facilities and more space. The resources for the new school building were received from donations at nearby mosques and Muslim businesses in the Leeds area. The school currently has ninety-five students enrolled and has a waiting list of about one hundred.

This school opens at 8.25am and finishes at 3.30pm every day and follows the national school calendar. It provides secondary education for girls aged 11 to 16 years (Year 7 to Year 11) from various ethnic backgrounds, including Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Arabs, Afghans and Somalis. Technically, the school has embraced an Islamic culture and ethos that can include different backgrounds and ethnicities under one roof in learning about Islam. However, 90% of the pupils are Pakistani, with 10% from other ethnicities, most coming from the surrounding area near the centre of Leeds, but a few coming from slightly further afield, such as from Morley.

Although NHCS is an independent school, it is a non-profit business. Thus, it is financially dependent on the school fees and on donations from the local community. The social class of the students varies, but most of them come from middle-class family backgrounds. Thus, the school fees are not an issue for (these) parents and are

lower than other private schools in Leeds. In 2011, the fee increased from £1800 to £1950 per year, due to an upgrade in the facilities for teaching and learning.

A Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing the development of NHCS and monitoring its efficacy. The Board is made up of members from various Pakistani backgrounds, including from private business people, local government officials, teachers, accountants and representatives from the religious sector. One of the trustees is a well-known successful local businessman in Leeds – Mr Abid Hussain, the owner of Abu Bakar superstores in Hyde Park, Roundhay and Bradford, and an active supporter of the Leeds Islamic Centre.

4.10.1 Aims and Objectives of the NHCS

The NHCS tries to show parents that it has aims and objectives that are in line with their wishes for their children, as well as with British government policies. According to the NHCS's website, these are:

- i. New Horizon Community School seeks to develop positive identities in pupils. We aim to produce British Muslims who are prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally, spiritually and physically to succeed as leaders in tomorrow's world.
- ii. New Horizon pupils are expected to integrate academic skills, *Quranic* principles, and ethical behaviour in order to make positive contributions to the global community.
- iii. New Horizon aims to develop in each pupil a balanced character enriched with knowledge, inspired to excellence and committed to the betterment of family, community and humanity (Home. See <http://newhorizonschool.co.uk/>. Retrieved on 5th July 2014).

The above aims and requirements are said to be carefully imparted in the curriculum and ethos of school, which I shall assess later based on my observations and interviews within the school community. In this section, I will simply consider the above aims and requirements in response to criticisms made towards Islamic schools (Halstead, 1998; Abbas, 2005). It emphasizes that it provides opportunities for schooling for some of the most vulnerable and least wealthy Muslim families in the area, some of whom may send their daughters back home rather than have them attend a non-Muslim school (Haw, 1998; Jawad, 2003). Thus, the school sees itself as offering an opportunity for young British Muslim girls to understand the Islamic way of life within a non-Muslim society.

As a consequence of its aims and objectives, and combined with its good range of resources³⁸, many religiously focused Muslim parents in Leeds are keen to send their daughters here. Although there are mushrooming of mosque education in many cities and towns, the mosque education offered a traditional style of teaching and learning that lead the parents sought alternatives for Islamic education.

4.11 Conclusion

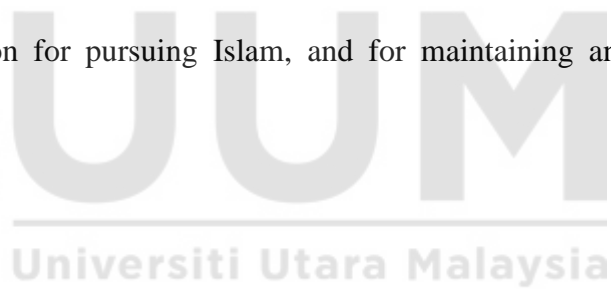
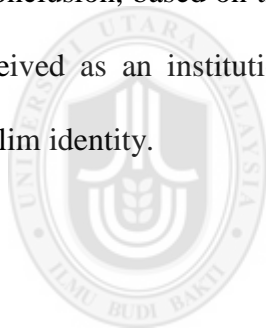
The evolvement of Islamic education both in Malaysia and Britain show that Muslims need Islamic education and has always been seeking for that. Under the Recommendation of Committee I of the First World Conference on Muslim Education, Islamic education “should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man [sic] through the training of the human spirit, intellect, rational

38 ‘Resources’ here refers to the curriculum, ethos and environment, teachers and staffing at the school. However, this school is still need to work out on facilities.

self, feelings and senses” (Meer, 2007: 59. See AMSS, 2004: 12). Nevertheless, Islamic educational provision in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has found it challenging to achieve this aim as a result of the globalisation of Western modernity during the Colonial and Postcolonial periods.

Hence, Muslim parents are keen to bring up their children in accordance with Islamic codes and conduct. The emphasis on Islam in bringing up children is not only about education *per se*, but also about developing values and practices, imbuing manners, morality, discipline, good attitudes and behaviours, as well as life routines.

In conclusion, based on the gathered literatures, it was revealed that Islamic school is perceived as an institution for pursuing Islam, and for maintaining and nurturing Muslim identity.



CHAPTER FIVE

Education and Muslim Women Identity

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will illustrate the Muslim women in early Islam, the Muslim women identity in the past and present at both context; Malaysia and the UK, then, the role of schools in the formation of Muslim girls' identity.

5.2 Women in Early Islam

The status of woman in Islam is something unique and novel that has no similarity in any other systems (Jawad & Benn 2003). In the Eastern Communist world, the democratic nations or during *Jahiliyyah* period, women were under depression and discrimination, and have not been treated as men's equals (Afkhani & Friedl, 1997; Jawad & Benn, 2003). The role of women in Muslim society has changed significantly in the centuries since Islam came in Arabia in the early 600 A.D. Their position has varied with shifting social, economic, education and political circumstances (Jawad & Benn, 2003). The contents of the *Quran* and the early Muslims history bear witness to the fact that woman is, at least, as vital to life as man himself, and that she is not inferior to him nor is she one of the lower species- the last revelation in respect of women in the *Quran* (33:35) that men and women are equal in the eyes of Allah (Sattar, 2012). In fact, their status was taken for granted to be equal to that of man but suits their nature as Muslim women. The term 'nature' is understandable because man and woman are not identical.

Sattar (2012) has sum up that the status of woman in Islam is unprecedentedly high and realistically suitable to her nature. She also added that Muslim woman first; is equal to man in pursuit of education and knowledge, second; is entitled to freedom of expression, third; participate in public life, fourth; to contract, to enterprise, to earn and possess independently.

5.3 Muslim Women Identity: Malaysia

The Muslim women identity in Malaysia is different now from the past. According to Swettenham (1899), Manderson (1978), Aisyah (1992), Mahani (2005, 2010) and Muhammad Ridzuan (2016), Malay women in the past were controlled by the culture, custom and beliefs in the fact that women should stay at home and learn how to be a good wife. Majority of women did not get formal education at school; some of them received education at least at the primary level. Manderson (1978) points his view based on the issue of educational right among genders. He insists that this attitude of Malay women was because of the perception of the Malay parents towards education especially before the World War II. During that time, school became a place of Christian missionary to spread Christianity and free mixing between sexes which contradicted to the local community culture. Meanwhile, during the colonization period, British had set up schools with the only aim to produce a woman with domestic skills (Swettenham, 1899; Mahani, 2005, Muhammad Ridzuan, 2016). Stevenson (1975) argues that British were not interested to upgrade Malay women's education as it did not contribute to the British economy. Awang Had Salleh (1981) claims that the British schooling system did not fulfill the needs³⁹ of Malay Muslim

³⁹ Majority of the parents were concerned on the importance of Islamic education especially for the boys. Thus, as an alternative to this British secular schools, the local community opted for pondok or madrasah for their children schooling. While for the girls, the parents wanted them to prepare on how to be a good wife (Awang Had Salleh, (1981).

women. Thus, this situation had become a significant barrier for parents to send their daughters to British school and thus making them bounded with the wrong perceptions⁴⁰.

Based on reports from the British government, the education of the Malay women had grown slowly and was far behind as compared to education for boys (Muhammad Ridzuan, 2016). The British government reported that the problem was due to the attitude of the Malays who were considered 'prejudicial' and 'pessimistic' to women's education (Muhammad Ridzuan, 2016). In addition, majority of the parents, were nervous about allowing their girls to traverse street or path unaccompanied and the mothers disliked losing the help from their daughters in serving the house chores. Assistance from girls is said to be very much needed by parents, especially to help cook, wash and care for other siblings while parents were doing their daily work (Muhammad Ridzuan, 2016).

Furthermore, the Malays are also said to be bounded by the customary, belief and cultural systems of the Malays. In the same vein, the position, roles and rights of males and females had been set in line with the customary, cultural and normal demands of the society. For example, a married woman is her husband's wife and is solely responsible for managing her husband, child and household. Women are also endowed with physical strength and more emotional. Hence, the role and position of women only hover around the domestic space. The situation is also due to the customary and cultural factors of the Malay community that still adhere to the 'patriarchal system' and have dominated the worldview of the community

⁴⁰ Women do not need education

(Muhammad Ridzuan, 2016). The husband, on the other hand, is primarily the breadwinner of the family. After the inception of Islam in the 13th century, the position of women has still not changed much. However, Islam places a high position for women (Muhammad Ridzuan, 2016).

On the British assumption that Malay customs and culture were considered conservative. In fact, this was the main cause why girls were denied the right of pursuing education. Malays were also worried and suspicious of the secular education system introduced by the British government which was to undermine the customs and cultural institutions of the Malay community (Muhammad Ridzuan, 2016). In traditional Malay societies, the role and status of women have been set according to the norms and beliefs of the community. The aspects such as the position, role and status of Malay women in Malays tradition were among the important aspects that needed to be examined as it had a direct relationship with the form and level of education given to the Malay women.

Wan Abdul Kadir (1993) in a study on Malay culture stated that the girls were educated with cooking skills, taking care of younger siblings and households. Girls who know how to take care of households were highly regarded by the community. Parents were very concerned about the abilities of women in housekeeping. They are also prohibited from going out of the house at will, and are also forbidden to associate with any man who is not blood-related. According to Frank Swettenhem (1929), Malay girls need to equip themselves to be wives one day.

She is mostly in the house, helps her mother to carry water from the river, morning and evening, when all Malays bathe, and assists in the cooking, or another household work.

Frank Swettenhem's statement is in line with R.O.Winstedt's (1969) writing on traditional education for Malay girls. Winstedt says Malays community believed that girls should stay indoors. Usually they are taught by their own mother about the basic needs of housekeeping such as cooking, making mats, sewing clothes and also helping men to work on paddy fields (Winstedt, 1969). In addition, girls are also taught how to guard their self-esteem and avoid getting caught up in the vicious or conflicting matters of Islam. Therefore, they are prohibited from associating with men who are not their *muhrim* (the nearest family), being out of the house alone without being accompanied and so on. It is not intended to stem or restrict the freedom of the Malay women but to safeguard their security and honor. According to gender researchers and analysts, the root cause of these issues is the inability of the Malaysian society at large to understand and handle “gender problems”. Malaysian society continued to perceive the role, responsibilities and relationship between men and women according to the traditional mindset, based on the traditional family model where a male bread-winner heads the family and the wife is a full-time homemaker (Ministry of Women and Family Development, 2003).

After the independence, with increased access to education, women began to seek knowledge at formal schools. The role and status of women in Malaysia during this time have undergone a profound change in the sense that women started to seek their recognition in education, social, economy and politics (Ministry of Women and Family Development, 2003). Thus, it led changes in the socio-cultural environment. This emergence has seen a change in women’s attitudes and ‘taboo’ towards their traditional roles.

The enrolment of female students at the primary level increased by more than three and a half times during the period of 1957–2000. At the secondary level ,the enrolment of female students increased by more than 36 times to reach a total enrolment of 985,692 students in 2000 (Ministry of Women and Family Development, 2003).

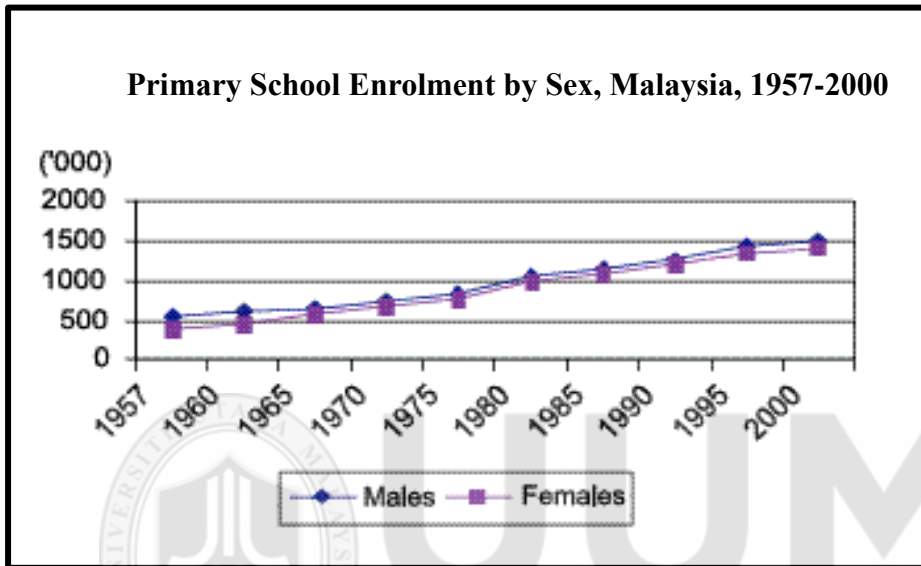


Figure 5.1: Chart of Primary School Enrolment by Sex (Source: Ministry of Education, 2000)

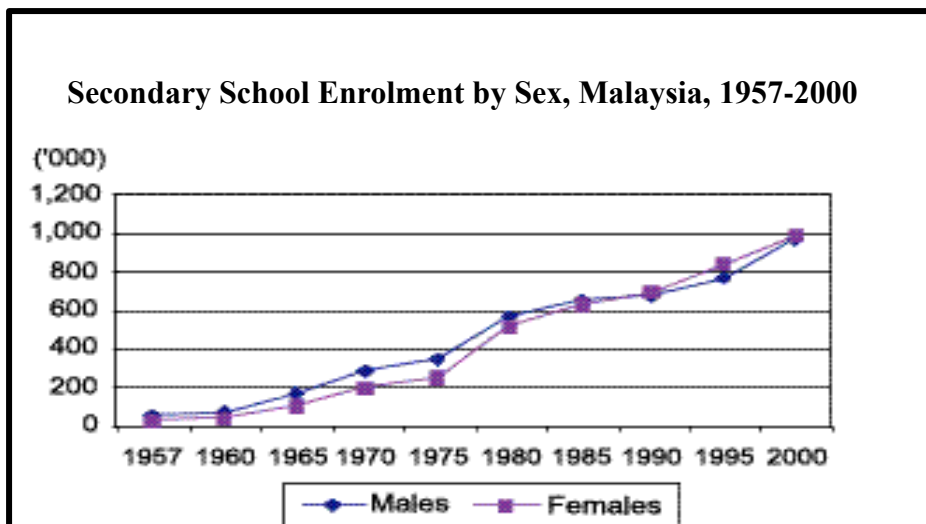


Figure 5.2: Chart of Secondary School Enrolment by Sex (Source: Ministry of Education, 2000)

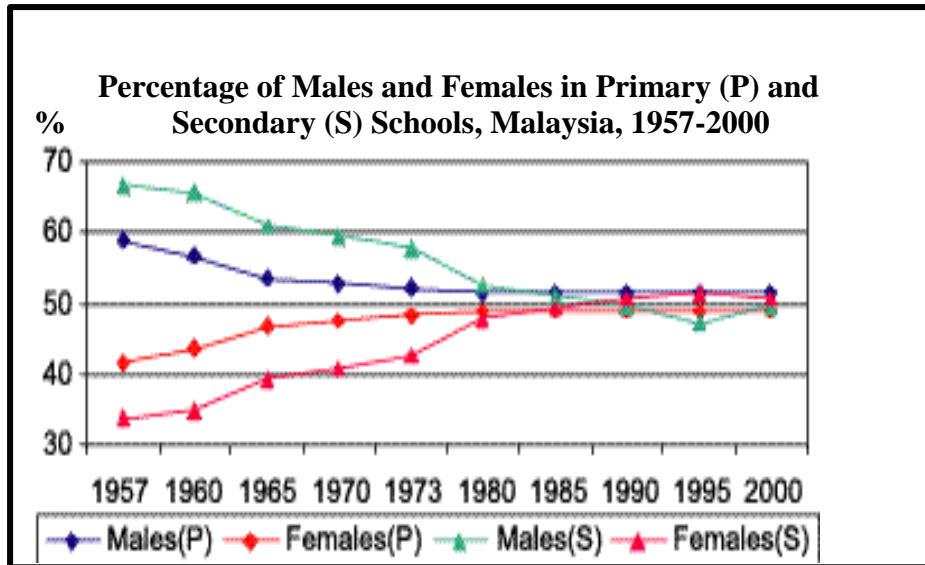


Figure 5.3: Chart of Percentage of Primary and Secondary Schools Enrolment by Sex (Source: Ministry of Education, 2000)

Specific indicators such as the enrolment ratio, the proportion of female to male student enrolment and transition rates reflect the improvement in the educational attainment of women. Women have benefited to a large extent from the expansion of education facilities and the provision of increased educational opportunities. The establishment of all-girls' schools such as Tunku Kurshiah College, Tun Fatimah Girls' School, Bukit Bintang Girls' School and Sri Putri Girls' School paralleled the establishment of the all-boys' schools to provide equal opportunities for girls to advance in education (Ministry of Women and Family Development, 2003). Data on enrolment at primary and secondary levels indicated that there was a significant increase in the number and proportion of female students at all levels since independence. Figure 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 show the primary and secondary school enrolment of male and female students during the period of 1957-2000.

Women today are quite aggressive and courageous and have contributed a lot to the development of the country. In fact, Malaysian women have progressed and

participated effectively in all aspects of development of the country in many key areas such as education, health, employment, and participation in power-sharing and in the decision-making processes. Changes in the legal and institutional framework have also been made to protect, preserve and safeguard their rights and improve their status. As Malaysia evolves from a subsistence agricultural economy to a knowledgebased economy, women will continue to be a primary force influencing the development of future generations of Malaysians. Changes in the socio-cultural environment, which have helped to shape the profile of Malaysian women today, will continue to impact women in development (Ministry of Women and Family Development, 2003).

The family structure has changed over time particularly in the 1990s. The trend shows an increase of nuclear families with dual income; and the Population Census 2000 indicates that 58 per cent of working women are married (Ministry of Women and Family Development, 2003).

Malaysia government has done many initiatives in enhancing the status and role of women including the following:-

- 1) National Vision Policy on Women (NPW)- Equitable sharing of resources and access to opportunities for men and women
- 2) Ministry of Women and Family Development
- 3) Women Affairs (HAWA) ,
- 4) The National Advisory Council for the Integration of Women in Development (NACIWID)
- 5) The National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO).

Furthermore, the enactment of new laws and the continuous review and amendment of existing legislation have been undertaken to preserve, reinforce and protect the rights and legal status of women. Therefore, since independence and over the past four decades, women have significant improvements in their status and in gender equality. Today, Malaysia has a growing number of women that are very active, educated and brave. They are:

- 1) Dato' Seri Dr. Wan Azizah Binti Wan Ismail, the first female Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development.
- 2) Tun Dr. Siti Hasmah bt. Mohd Ali, wife of the current Prime Minister of Malaysia, is a medical doctor. She was the second Malay woman to graduate from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, Singapore in 1955, and in a way, set the record for women in her time.
- 3) Tan Sri Nuraizah Abdul Hamid was honoured as a Woman of Distinction in Malaysia for the year 2001. The award conferred on her was a special recognition and appreciation for being one of the most successful and prominent, high-ranking woman administrators in the public service.
- 4) Dato' Dr. Mashitah Ibrahim, was a Deputy Minister and also one of the most prominent Muslim women scholars.

The accomplishments of these women will definitely be an inspiration to other women in Malaysia to strive for greater heights.

5.4 Muslim Women Identity: The United Kingdom

The self-identity for Pakistani Muslim women in the UK is bounded by the culture, belief and tradition. Thus, Muslim Pakistani community in Britain are very much aware of the potential to lose aspects of their religion, identity and culture through interactions with a modern, secular and multi-ethnic society (Smalley, 2006). It is difficult, from a sociological perspective, to distinguish between culture and religion. There are overlaps between both culture and religion and one often influences the other in the determination of the social constructs that people create. British Pakistani Muslim women often spoke about what they called 'authentic Islam' and 'culture'- the former gives women rights, the latter -by imposing patriarchal interpretations of faith- deny their rights in which can affect their Muslim women identity formation. The 'culture' that they speak about has two facets: firstly, patriarchal culture prevalent within many Muslim communities which interprets faith in ways that can marginalise women. Secondly, dominant secular culture prevalent in pluralist British society which also marginalises Muslim women by dismissing the religiosity of Muslim women as a signifier of their oppression. It is somewhere between these two cultures that 'Muslim women lose their identity and voices or rather their identity and voices are taken away from them' (Contractor, 2012: 57)

In the past, most of the first generation of Muslim Pakistani neither said they were entirely 'British' nor wanted to be, but had a strong sense of their own culture. They placed a strong emphasis on family, kinship and neighbours (Modood et al., 1994: 97). Anwar (1998) and Shaw (2000) have argued that concepts such as physical security, family/*biradari*, marriage, religion, and area or country of origin, all 'played a part in setting the dimensions of community boundaries and conversely

strengthened the bond of community leading to encapsulation' (Shaw, 2000: 294). In a similar tone but highlighting racism and exclusion that went unaddressed in the 1960s and 1970s, Parekh (2000: 27) has claimed that 'their sense of community owes as much to how they are treated as to where they came from'.

Additionally, Yilmaz (2005) argues that ethnic minorities developed 'avoidance and resistance strategies' that affected the Muslim women identity formation. Muslim settlers felt most safe in their own communities (Anwar 1998: 139), and according to Anwar (1998) and Ihsan (2005: 30), these minorities 'have refused to be assimilated and have in fact become more ethnic and more distinctive through their attempts to resist assimilation' and integration.

Apart from the culture, social and belief tradition, the articulation of Muslim identities within the UK also occurs within a contested cultural politics and thus, Muslim identities become a means of contesting power. For example, the recent political controversy over the rights of Muslim women is the issue of *hijab* (Dwyer, 1993; Haw, 1998; Halstead, 2005; Jawad, 2006). Hopkins (2006) found that women who are wearing *hijab* are more likely to report discrimination in the labour market than those who adopt a more western appearance when they are in public spaces. For others, conforming to a more western appearance is a survival strategy that enables them to feel more accepted in the labour market (Brah & Shaw 1992). Thus, the Muslim women started to claim their right in wearing *hijab* in the workplaces. Due to the emergence of Muslim recognition, Muslim educational institution that spread awareness about observing *aurah* and in Islam, the awareness of wider Muslim community about the importance of Islamic education and Islamic identity formation,

Hopkins and Patel (2006) report that increasing numbers of British Muslim women are reasserting their Muslim women identity by adopting the *hijab*. For many, the *hijab* is a form of resistance against male attention, which allows them to move freely in public places, but also against Islamophobia (Dwyer, 1993; Hopkins and Patel 2006).

According to Raza (1993), Muslim identities became altered and weakened by a number of factors: westernization via the ‘income factor’ (i.e. through becoming integrated into the class structure and culture of British society by employment); through education in the state school system; through their peers at school; through a medium of language transmitting the ideas, values and knowledge of the dominant society and culture; and, finally, through the society itself, which can devalue other cultures and lifestyles (Butler, 2001: 51). Therefore, it is undeniable that parents leave no room for the ‘take the best, leave the rest’ attitude of the western value-system and counteract the influence of their new contexts in identity formation (Lewis, 2007). However, Lewis (2007: 39) perceives the ‘take the best and leave the rest’ approach to allow the process of discernment to take place, and argues that without it, Muslim children could become ‘culturally schizophrenic or be locked into an identity crisis’. Given this dynamic, a process of reinventing tradition and identity could be developed, ‘in the sense that they have emerged at least one step removed from the original model’ (Ballard, n.d: 13).

Moreover, according to Gilliat- Ray (2010) the self- ascription ‘Muslim’ can be more or less meaningful at different times in the life of an individual. What is more, Nagel and Staeheli (2009) said that the stereotype meaning of Muslim is incompatible with

the secularized, modern public sphere of living in a non- Muslim country that needs a lot of negotiation from the religious tradition, religious context and the host society. Thus, Muslim community need to restructure the Muslim identity to suit the wider British context. Within the Muslim community there is a need to initiate a shift from cultural paradigms to those that are Islamic and emancipatory towards women (Pickthall, 1926; Engineer, 1992; Bewley, 1999).

While much work has considered the importance of such identities for the younger generation, the complex ways in which identities are constructed and contested have not been fully explored. Few studies have attempted a detailed account about reconstructing the Muslim women identity at home through nurture and nature education (Smalley, 2006). In fact, Gilliat- Ray (2010) has examined the two main institutions involved in the Muslim identity, religious nurture and socialization of British Muslim; the family and the education system and especially that offered by Islamic institutions. British Muslim recognize the critical importance of a strong family life and effective education for the future transmission of Islam.

Jacobson (1998), Modood (2005) and Smalley (2006) claim that the second generations in these communities have been labelled as confused and disaffected youngsters as a result of the ‘restrictions’ and social boundaries set by their parents. However, according to Ellis (1991), Raza (1993), and Butler (2001: 50), many Muslim parents feel that the second generation is a ‘lost generation’, who are being enticed away from Islam by the influence of the ‘un-Islamic values’ of British society. Similarly, Eade (1991), Werbner (1991), Brah (1992), Dwyer (1997), Haw (1998), Shaw (2000) and Abbas (2005) argue that young British Muslims are influenced by a

complex interaction of personal, community and social beliefs that leave them ‘caught between two cultures’ and involved in a ‘cultural clash’ between their ‘home’ and ‘British’ ways of life.

On the other hand, Saifullah-Khan (1976, 1979) suggests that the second generation can be defined not as passive "victims" who are "caught in between" but instead as skilled negotiators of both cultures. He argues that young people switch codes or switch identities within different domains - such as the home and the school. A similar argument is developed in the work of Rashid (1981) on the socialization and education of young Pakistani women in London. Rashid argues that while young women may often feel they are negotiating two separate cultures, this does not necessarily produce conflict and that individuals are able ‘to combine elements of both cultures to produce "a "synthetic" culture, a blend of Pakistani and Western ideas and forms of behavior’ and new identity" (Rashid 1981:183). These studies also emphasized that ethnic cultures should not be regarded as fixed but are instead dynamic and changing (Brah, 1979, Dwyer, 1999).

According to Parekh (2000: 27), Muslims have been ‘constantly changing and reconstructing themselves through fusing their traditions of origin with elements of the majority culture [that they have settled in]’, whilst still adhering to Islamic values. This approach may enable these young British Muslims to become clearer about their religious identities, as it allows them to gain a more sharpened understanding of what is central to Islam and how to apply this in their lives, whilst also being British citizens. According to the activist Badawi, the new generation of British Muslims are ‘entering into the mainstream of British society whilst maintaining their Muslim

identity. They accept Islamic prescriptions about modest dress but want that to be in a Western style. They want to eat Italian food, but it must be *halal* pizza (Hussain, n.d: 2)

For Muslim women in Britain, the shift in attitudes and behaviours is most visible among the generation of grown-up British-born Muslim women. Many are increasingly challenging traditional attitudes and customs; moulding new identities that encompass some traditional values, whilst integrating them with new ones; and adopting cultural values that suit their needs (Werbner, 2002). Within their cultural boundaries, they are often less trapped by concepts of *sharam* (without any shame), *izzat* (honour) and *biradari* (extended patrilineal kinship group, clan) (Shaw, 2000; Lewis, 2007; Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

Jawad and Benn (2003: 55) observe that in the past, for complex reasons of social status, educational background and cultural ideology, women have often been discouraged from continuing in education within some South Asian and other Muslim families. If they stand up for their rights, women may be accused of bringing ‘shame’ to the family, and seen to be challenging *izzat* (honour). Indeed, sometimes ‘female education is viewed as a threat to the traditional customs and way of life of the community’ (Jawad & Benn, 2003: 55). In fact, in communities where they have traditionally been rare, educated Muslim women are often viewed with suspicion when they exercise their assertiveness, question patriarchy or challenge tradition. Parents with a particular background may believe that education will liberate a woman, and regard this as a threat to the ‘traditional’ stereotype of the wife or daughter-in-law, who is expected by many men to be obedient, subservient and to

question nothing (Raza, 1991; Jawad & Benn, 2003). However, while some Muslims males may seek to root this perception of female education in religion, it is contested by many others (Raza, 1991; Jawad & Benn, 2003; Rizvi, 2007). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged both men and women to acquire knowledge equally, “from the cradle to the grave” (Jawad & Benn, 2003:12).

Nowadays, they have become more open and keen to actively participate in society, education, politics and the economy (Werbner, 2002). In society, some good examples of active Muslim women in the UK include the Al-Masoom Foundation – established by a group of Pakistani Muslim women led by Mrs. Khan in Manchester (Werbner, 1996), the An-Nisa society⁴¹ in Brent, London.

In education for example, a range of recent studies highlights the growing numbers of young South Asian Muslim women in higher education (Ahmad 2001; Tyrer and Ahmad 2006; Hussain and Bagguley 2007) and celebrates the achievements of women who have overcome the culture boundaries and communal pressures to pursue their education. Some authors see the pursuit of higher education by young Muslim women as evidence of the reinterpretation and reconstruction of ‘traditional’ values and practices of the identity (Bhopal 1997; Shain, 2002; Abbas, 2005).

In politics, Salma Yaqoob – ‘the leader of the Respect Party and in 2006 she was elected as a city councillor for Sparkbrook ward on Birmingham City Council’ (Yaqoob, 2010). The drives of these politically active and prominent Muslim women

⁴¹ An Nisa’s website: <http://www.an-nisa.org/>

to be involved in shaping British Muslim society are inspired by majority of Muslim women across the UK.

In terms of economic activity, for example, they have started to work in order to support their families financially and are the main breadwinners in some cases. In terms of their participation in society, they establish Muslim women's organizations, and organize events and activities 'with the community, which appropriately challenge the Muslim community's position concerning the place of women and their needs' (Irving et al., 2003). The most prominent of these organizations is the An-Nisa Society in London, which aims to protect the rights of Muslim women in social and political policies. As Gilliat-Ray (2010: 218) describes it:

An-Nisa aims to bridge the gap between local service providers in the statutory sector on the one hand, and often poorly funded community-based voluntary initiatives on the other.

The outside factors that encourage women to this shift in attitude are derived from education and support from Muslim organizations and leadership. Some mosques now open the door for women (Maqsood, 2005; Khan, 2010) due to the changing attitude of *Imams*, who have begun to engage with and address the social, educational and political realities facing Muslims in contemporary Britain, as well as contextualizing Islam in wider society (Jacobson, 1998: 167; Maqsood, 2005; Khan, 2010). To some extent, Muslim educational organizations like the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) encourage the rights of Muslim girls in Muslim Independent schools. Elsewhere, organisations like The Muslim Youth Helpline⁴² focus on the development of both male and female young Muslims, through education, social and spiritual

⁴² The Muslim Youth's website: <http://www.muslimyouth.net/>

programmes to encourage teenagers to become active British Muslims. Teenage Muslim girls are encouraged to participate in its programmes and events, including in sports and camps, a rarity for Muslim women in the past.

5.5 Islamic Education and Muslim Women Identity

In modernity, progressive Muslim intellectuals have been extremely supportive of greater equality and education for Muslim women, often appealing to reformed interpretations of the Islamic sources (Benn, 1998; Jawad & Benn, 2003; Azam, 2006; Zaman, 2007). In recent decades, Muslim women have also begun to redefine themselves and their role in society through studying the fundamentals of Islam. As Geaves (1996:60) contends: ‘this new awareness has come about not only because of the need for Muslim women to redefine themselves but also because of an increased awareness of religion brought about by the resurgence of Islam worldwide’. The vitality of Muslim girl’s and women’s education can be seen through i) the establishment of Islamic schools for Muslim girls and ii) the mushrooming of registered Muslim organisations that run study circles⁴³ for women and mothers, iii) the emergence of Muslim women scholars and preachers and, iv) the mosque activities that are open to both male and female. Today, many mosques and organizations run study circles for women. According to Gilliat-Ray (2010: 217-220), in the UK, *Quranic* and Islamic study circles were first established by Muslim women back in the 1970s, and were usually convened by women in their homes, in mosques or in community centres. Hence, these circles were described as ‘important loci of

⁴³ These circles are usually led by a scholar or by knowledgeable Muslim women, and enable women to learn about and discuss Islam, the *Quran*, *fiqh*, Islamic doctrine and issues surrounding Islam and being a Muslim (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 217). The participant is free to give her opinion and ask questions about the issues discussed. Therefore, they provide ‘regular and more formalized opportunities for groups of women to learn about their faith together’ and develop intellectual, emotional and social skills Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 217).

inter-household women-centred' activity (Werbner 1990: 156). They have provided spaces for women 'to become conversant with Islamic sources and this has enabled them to articulate their Islamic rights' (Afshar, 1998: 119; see Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 220). For some women, study circles provide an important means for resisting exclusion and a way to enter a feminist discourse in which they are free to express their Islamic rights from within their tradition (Afshar, 1998; Samad, 1998; Butler, 1999; Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

Furthermore, many Muslim parents now put fewer restrictions on their girls' higher education studies (Jawad & Benn, 2003), and often actively encourage them in such pursuits. The Muslim community has started to become aware that the project of maintaining the Muslim identity will fail if no Islamic education is imparted to the next generation. As a result of such developments, the Muslim community has become more capable of distinguishing between cultural tradition and Islamic culture. In turn, this has led to a growth in the number of Muslim girls' independent schools and the percentage of Muslim girls attending universities and colleges (Raza, 1993; Jawad & Benn, 2003). Butler (2001) argues that a majority of new generation women who are highly educated want to study, pursue careers, and are subsequently seeking ways of putting off getting married until much later in their lives.

The attitudes of Muslim parents are changing as a result of the demands of communities, the state and wider society. Nonetheless, many still view single-sex schools to be important for ensuring that their girls receive education in a secure environment. According to Halstead (1991; 2005; Cf. Haw 1998), there are two strong grounds for single-sex schooling for Muslim girls: firstly they afford more

freedom for them to develop individual potential, balanced understanding, and confidence when they are in an environment where there is less danger of sexual harassment; and secondly the presence of boys in the classroom may negatively affect the educational achievement of girls.

Single-sex school shows the clear benefits of Muslim schooling for Muslim pupils especially the girls. These are first; grounded in the importance of maintaining of religious and cultural identities for the Muslim community through education that meets parents' preferences for their daughters as a priority (Anwar, 1982; Iqra Trust, 1991; Mabud, 1992 & Haw, 1998). Second; as a way to preserve *izzat* and *sharam* in a modern society (Jawad & Benn, 2003), third; to provide opportunities for girls to explore their potentials in a female-dominated atmosphere (Haw, 1998; Jawad & Benn, 2003; Halstead, 2005), and finally as a stepping- stone for girls to become active, educated and positive *Muslimahs* in the future.

The provision of single- sex school reflects on the importance of girls' education in comparison to the past, when girls were more generally excluded. Today, parents' attitudes have changed from this traditional view, with them actively encouraging their daughters to pursue higher education. This changing attitude reflects modernization in the sense that parents nowadays recognize the rights of women in education. Apart from its curriculum – which is a combination of both the national and Islamic – the success of this school can be attributed to it being a female-dominated space, which, as many scholars argue, provides the best place for girls to explore their potential, given the absence of sexual harassment and the existence of a

rewarding atmosphere (Haw, 1998, 2011; Shah, 2004; Halstead, 2005). This then provides young Muslims a tangible resource from which to develop their identity.

For subsequent generations, religion has often been the key factor in determining identity. This is particularly the case for young women. The resurgence that can be seen amongst young Muslims of their religious identity does in many cases correspond to an increased level of knowledge and practice. Dr. Raj⁴⁴ argued that the curriculum, environment and ethos of the school enhance the women self-esteem and inspire confidence in them about their culture and future, aiming to advance pupils' personal and social development, which are regarded as the most essential educational goals (Mustafa, 1999).

Haw (1998, 2011; Jacobson, 1998; Modood, 2005; Halstead, 2010; Lewis, 2010) noted that the majority of Muslim parents who migrated to Britain were very worried about their daughters' being educated in British state schools. This is because of conflicts between some aspects of contemporary British culture and Islam, such as the free mixing between different sexes, alcohol-use among British teenagers, and the loss of *adab* (manners) and *akhlaq* (virtue) as a woman. Indeed, some Muslim parents – for example 'those strongly advocating Pakistani culture and social and cultural mores' – have in the past sent their daughters to Pakistan when they reach puberty, so that they can complete their education in a single-sex school environment (Haw, 1998: 155-157). In some cases, parents have paid for their daughters to study in relatively poorly resourced schools when they think that these schools provide the

⁴⁴ Interview with him on 14th September 2013.

only safe environments, 'devoid of any explicit threats to their value system' (Haw, 1998: 155-157; Shaw, 1998; Halstead; 2005).

Some families will try to avoid sending their daughters to school altogether, or else send them to Pakistan until they are no longer within the age range for compulsory education in Britain (Azam, 2006). Due to pressures placed upon parents by the community and the state, few parents will now withdraw their children from school until after the age of sixteen (Raza, 1993), when they are often prevented from going on to further education in order to be married (Butler, 2001; Charsley, 2007). In some families, however, mothers have educated their daughters at home (Jawad & Benn, 2003). As Khanum (1992) argued two decades ago following her visit to Bradford, the lack of schooling for some Muslim girls has less to do with education *per se* than with Muslim men exercising control over the lives of women in the family, as well as within the wider community.

5.6 Conclusion

The provision of Islamic schools and Islamic education enables Muslim women to engage with and adapt to the contemporary societies that they live in whilst retaining their Muslim identities. Muslim women are now also responding to the need to work in other contexts to achieve community cooperation and to help educate other women about what it means to be Muslim. To achieve this end, they need support from both the Muslim community and the state – through Muslim organizations and leadership and state-recognition of their Muslim rights as Muslim women citizens.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

SHAPING THE IDENTITY: MAKTAB MAHMUD ALOR SETAR BRANCH (GIRLS) AND NEW HORIZON COMMUNITY SCHOOL (NHCS), LEEDS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of case studies of Maktab Mahmud (Girls), the Alor Setar Branch and New Horizon Community School (NHCS). These schools provide a space for Muslim girls to learn the national and Islamic curriculum in an Islamic environment. The provision of these schools is important for many Muslim parents especially those who concerns on educating their children while instilling a good Muslim identity to children at school. According to Solahuddin (2015), Muslim parents are very protective of their children because of the current problem of the society such as free life style in which sometimes in conflict with the *shari'ah*. Apart from that, the modernization, secularization and the exposure to the social media and mass media may influence the identity formation of their children. In these case studies, the research focuses on the role of the school in shaping Muslim identity to its students by examining its environment and ethos, its RE subjects, and its teachers as role models to the students.

6.2 Maktab Mahmud Alor Setar Branch (Girls)

Maktab Mahmud is one of the best Islamic schools in Kedah. Apart from its reputation, prestige and legacy, this school provides an Integrated Islamic curriculum or known as KBD (Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini). Both the Islamic curriculum and

ethos distinguish this school from mainstream schools in Malaysia generally and in Kedah specifically.

6.2.1 The Environment and Ethos of MM

The Islamic environment and ethos at this school can be seen through its' decoration, facilities, activities and the school's environment. Below is the data gathered from the observation, interview and focus group to explore how the environment and ethos are being constructed and the impact of the school's ethos and environment to the students' identity.

6.2.1.1 Data from the Observation

Once I have received the permission from the Lembaga Maktab Mahmud (School's Governor), I excitedly went to the Maktab Mahmud, hence, I may investigate the secret recipe of producing good students with Muslim identity. At 10am on 12 October 2016, I first put my foot on the Maktab Mahmud compound. The environment was good and I could feel the '*biah*'⁴⁵ at this school.

In terms of the school building, MM's building is adequately maintained and comprises numbers of classrooms, an IT laboratory, science laboratories, living skills laboratories, a library, counselling room, language rooms, sick bays, *musolla*, staff rooms and the school office. The MM reflects its Islamic character through its decorations and environment, such as *Quranic* verses, *hadiths*, poems and proverbs and Islamic calligraphy along the school's corridor, on the school walls and classrooms, and boards full with Islamic displays.

⁴⁵ Islamic environment, ethos and vibe.

The first thing that suggests that this a *biah solehah* school is the Maktab Mahmud community's clothing, with everyone covering the *aurah* (certain part of the body that Muslim women need to cover from others to see)⁴⁶. Secondly, Islamic greetings are routinely used in Maktab Mahmud's school life. The students offered me a polite *salam* and welcome, and they were helpful and friendly in the sense that they showed me around the school's office building. Thirdly, decoration such as *Quranic* verses, *hadith* and Islamic idioms in Islamic calligraphic can be seen around the school. Finally, the school totally separates its facilities between boys and girls.

6.2.1.2 Data from the Interviews and a Focus Group

For the interview under the environment section, I have divided this section into four aspects. They are school's rules and regulations, school's co-curricular activities, school's culture and school's environment and facilities. I will discuss each in the following paragraphs.

6.2.1.2.1 School's Rules and Regulations

The rules and regulations of the school is one of the factors that affected the students' identity. Moreover, the rules and regulations are also in tandem with the objectives and vision and mission of the school. As mentioned by the Principal:

Our aim is to produce educated and intellectual students with good akhlak in accordance with Islamic value who are responsible to Islam, race and nation. We also have a mission and vision that are equivalent to it's the objectives. We want to be the best Islamic educational institution in Malaysia by producing students who excel and are balanced physically, emotionally, spiritually,

⁴⁶ For men, they need to cover between the navel until the lower part of their knee. While for women, they have to close all part of their body except their face and their wrist

intellectually and socially and are integrated based on Islamic law for the development of the religion, nation and community through quality education and the wellbeing of students.

The HEP teacher commented about the rules and regulations of the school. She said that:

The rules and regulations of the school are decided by the school as well as the Lembaga (school's governor). We will update the regulation book regularly and we will make sure that these regulations are relevant to the current social problem of the society. The regulations are important to educate students to be better muslimahs. This is the main aim of MM, to produce a better muslimah. And alhamdulillah.. the students are good.

The below pie chart shows that 23 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's rules and regulations impacted their identity.

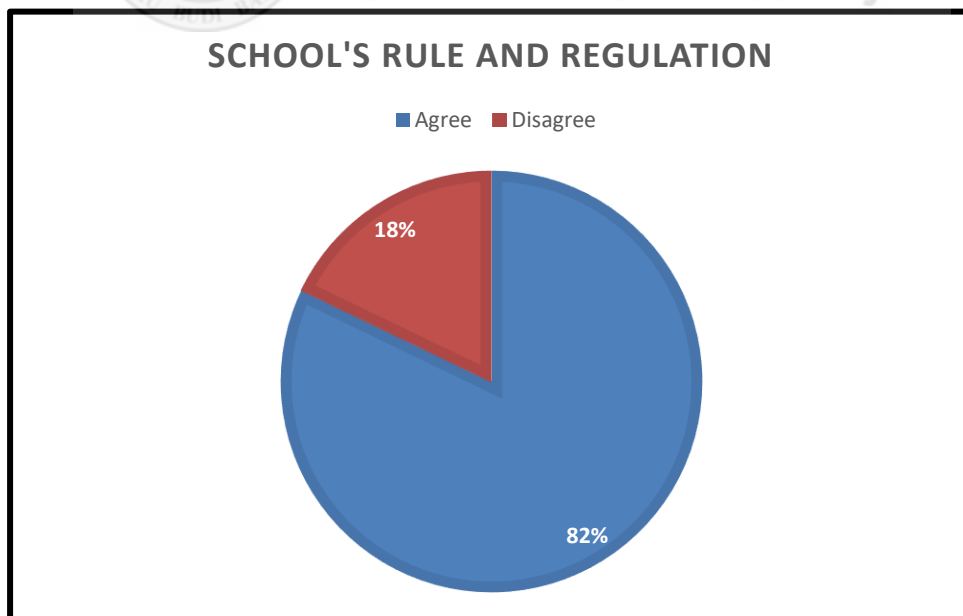


Figure 6.1: School's Rules and Regulations Impacted Students' Identity

From the interview sessions with the students, I have pointed out that majority of students agree the school's rules and regulations give three impacts to their identity. They are in terms of *shaksiyah*, self- discipline and academic excellence. The graph below shows the number of students for each theme.

Shaksiyah

Majority of the students agreed that the school's regulation can help in building *shaksiyah Islamiyah*. In fact, throughout the observation, the students are encouraged to demonstrate an understanding of Islam within their routine at the school. For example, students must give *salams* (Islamic greetings) when they meet each other, mutual help and respect to each other. Moreover, students are prohibited from using bad language. Hence, they must try to portray a good example for each other at all times. During interviews with the students at MM, one student asserted:

Syahirah:

I love this school because the environment here is much better than in the SMKs. We are very lucky to be here because this is an Islamic school and we learn within an Islamic environment. This Islamic environment has affected my personality and identity in the sense that I cover the aurah properly inside and outside the school, I am concerned about my words, my actions and my appearance. I'm pretty sure that my family is also happy with me right now.

A student, Zakirah claimed that, the school's regulation does not only emphasize on the school's reputation per se, but also on the importance of developing *shaksiyah Islamiyyah* on student's identity. As she said:

I think the most important objective of implementing the school's regulations is to educate and train students with shaksiyah

Islamiyyah. Developing shaksiyah Islamiyah is one of the reasons of why I am here. I believe, this shaksiyah Islamiyyah can be developed through school's regulations.

The pie chart below shows that all of the 30 respondents agreed that the school's rules and regulations can develop good *shaksiyah* to the students.

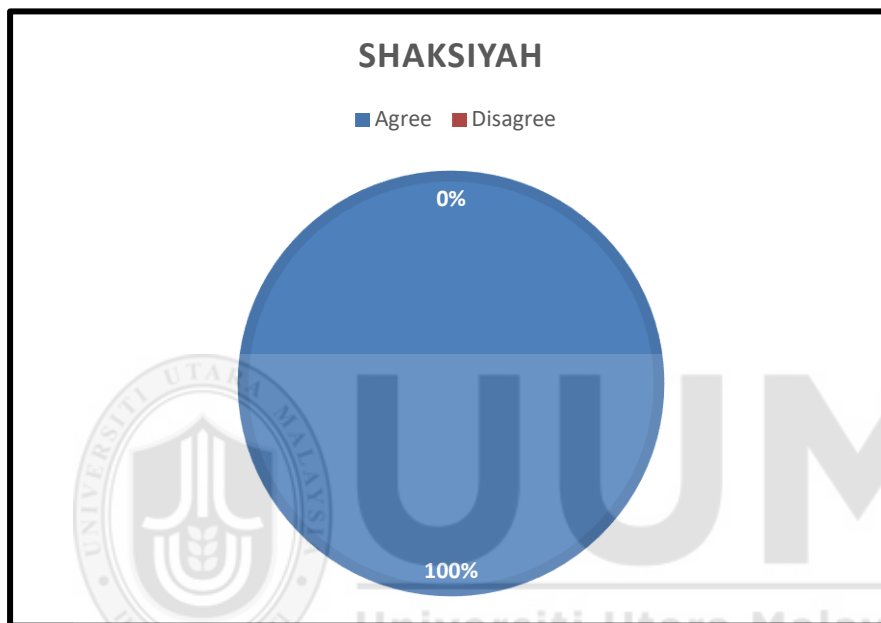


Figure 6.2: *Shaksiyah*

Self- Discipline

Two students, Ibtisam and Adibah commented as below:

Ibtisam:

I think the rules and regulations of the school have played a big role in shaping the Islamic identity to the students. I become more disciplined in the sense that I'm always aware the 'dos' and the 'don'ts' inside the school. Form there, it slowly shaped my identity.

Adibah :

My parents said that they are very happy with my attitude now. I become more aware of what is good and bad, what are the things Allah forbid and allow. I think my improvement is because of the rules and regulations of the school. I become more disciplined and I practice them even at home.

The rules and regulations also have their own method of assessment called the ‘merit’ system, which evaluates the students’ behaviour based on this regulation. This merit system has encouraged the students to obey the rules. As a student named Farah said:

The rules and regulations of the school are very strict, and students will be punished if we do not obey the rules. We also have merit system. Since we are afraid of being punished, indirectly, it trains me to be more disciplined.

The pie chart below shows that all of the 30 respondents agreed that the school’s rules and regulations can develop discipline to the students.

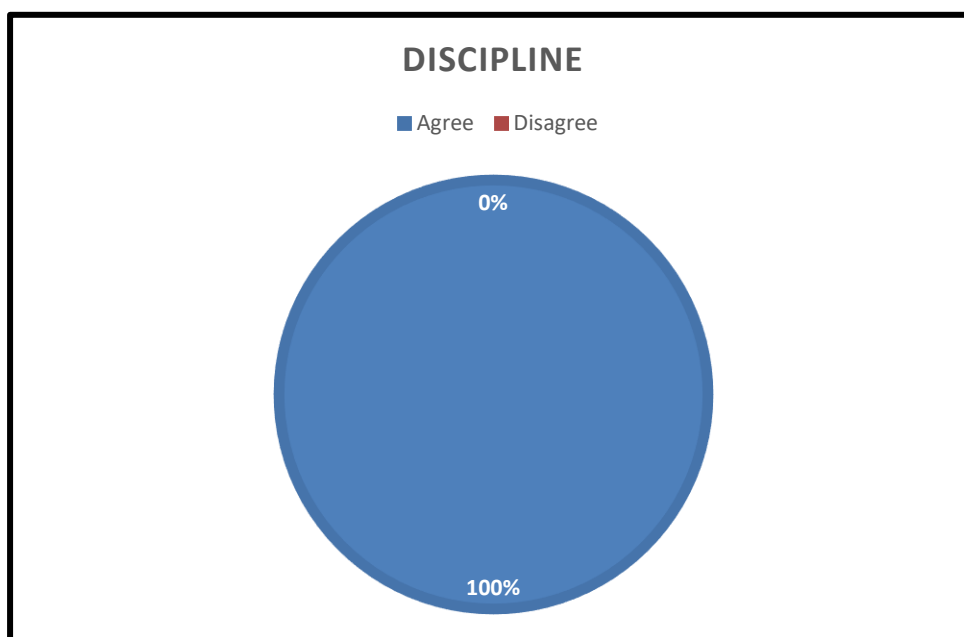


Figure 6.3: Discipline

Academic excellence

There is a moderate number of respondents who agreed that the school's regulation can help students to be academically excellent. Most of them said that, the aim and objective of the regulations generally is to make students become more discipline and have good *shaksiyah*. They claimed that in order to be a successful student, they need to be disciplined. Izni commented during the focus groups as below:

Izni:

I agree that the rules and regulations can help in academic excellence. The key success to be an excellent student is to have self- discipline. In fact, this MM aims to produce excellent students with Islamic identity. I think the rules and regulations of the school has impacted one's academic excellence.

On the other hand, there were about 4 students who did not agree that the school's rules and regulations encouraged them to be excellent in academic. As stated by a student, Iwana:

The main purpose of the school's rules and regulation is to make students become more discipline. It is nothing to do with one's academic performance. I got a lot of friends who regularly absent (class) but they performed very well in the exam.

The below pie chart shows that about 26 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's rules and regulations can help students to be excellent academically.

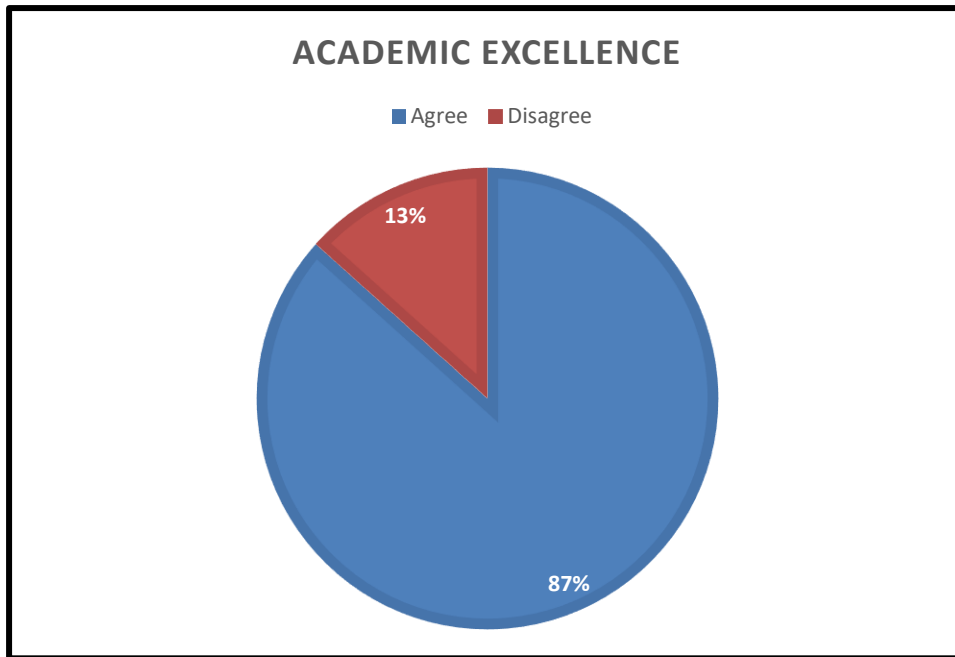


Figure 6.4: Academic Excellence

Tolerance and Respect

Majority of the respondents are neutral for this issue, which shows that the issue of tolerance and respect is not crucial. The majority of MM students come from similar background in terms of ethnicity, nationality, academic background and religion background. As stated by a student, Nabihah:

I think we don't have any problem with the issue of tolerance and respect. In fact, we always tolerate and respect each other. It's a norm here. There's nothing to worry about.

The pie chart below shows that 7 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's rules and regulations can develop the value of tolerance and respect to the students, while about 23 respondents are neutral.

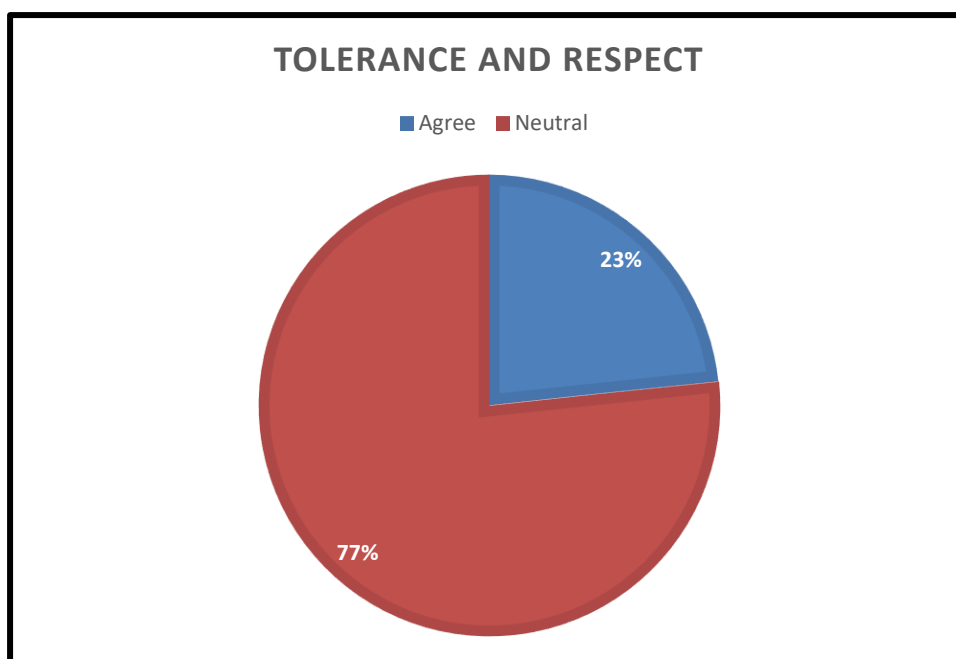


Figure 6.5: Tolerance and Respect

6.2.1.2.2 School's Co-Curricular and Islamic Activities.

The school's activities were planned by the HEP (Hal Ehwal Pelajar, Student Affairs Division and the school's governor). At Maktab Mahmud this plan is referred to as *taqwim* (school's calendar). The school's *taqwim* comprises the curriculum and co-curricular activities. The co-curricular activities include clubs, sports, uniforms club and so on. Furthermore, the activities also include Mentor Mentee, *Qiyamullail*⁴⁷, *Maulidur Rasul*⁴⁸, *Isra' Mikraj*⁴⁹, *Ihya Ramadhan*⁵⁰, *khatam Quran*⁵¹, *tazkirah*⁵², *tilawah Al- Quran*⁵³ competition and *hafazan Al- Quran*⁵⁴ competition.

⁴⁷ literally it means standing in the night but in the *shariah* (in Islamic context) it means it is a voluntary prayer which is prayed after *Isya'* and before the break of dawn (Zakir Naik, 2013). Retrieved on 26 July 2017, <https://zakirnaikqa.wordpress.com/2013/08/01/q-what-is-the-meaning-of-term-qiyam-ul-layl-and-how-is-it-different-from-taraweeh/>

⁴⁸ The birth of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W

⁴⁹ This is a reference to the event known as *Mi'raj* (Ascension) and *Isra'* (Night Journey)

⁵⁰ enlivens the spirit and reaps the *barakah* of Ramadhan

⁵¹ Celebrating completing the Qur'aan

⁵² Give advice or reminder

⁵³ Recitation of Quran

⁵⁴ Memorization of Quran

6.2.1.2.2.1 Data from the Participant Observation in an *Usrah* Activity

Salsabila and Ulya (both 16 years old) were appointed as *usrah* leaders for *usrah* program at school. Both are intelligent students with good moral value and Muslim identity. They have developed a new set of social and intellectual skills, and they were often trained by the Badan *Dakwah* (BD, or *Dakwah* Bureau) and *Nuqaba'* Leadership (NL). Both BD and NL are under Students Affairs Unit, Lembaga Maktab Mahmud. As I noted earlier, the spiritual development is very important for MM students. Thus, the collaboration between the school and the Lembaga is necessary to ensure that the needs of students here are fulfilled. Salsabila and Ulya's interactions with these activities led them to pass on the knowledge and skills learned from these organisations (BD and NL) to the girls. As Salsabila says:

I love to share information about Islam to my friends. I think this program is a medium for us to gain knowledge about Islam in an informal way outside the classroom. I should thank the Badan Dakwah and Nuqaba' Leadership because it gave me the opportunity to be a Naqibah (usrah leader).

Even though Salsabila is still a student, she is able to talk in depth on topics including religion, society, *muamalat*⁵⁵, and so on. She is able to conduct the *usrah* very well, in the fact that the *usrah* member listened and paid full attention to her during the *usrah*. Through sitting in at the *usrah*, I have been impressed by her knowledge and determination in leading the *usrah*. When asked about her motivation for conducting this *usrah*, Salsabila said:

Leading the usrah is initially as a result of noticing a need in the school. My main motivation was to give something back to my friends for the sake of Allah. I love this role because it gives me

⁵⁵ Dealings, the rules regarding the social interactions between human and other human activities.

chances to share knowledge, to go outside the local community, to talk to people and at the same time it is a challenge for me to become a better Muslimah.

The *usrah* is conducted in an informal and relaxed way, with everyone free to give their opinion. The *usrah* provides a conducive, relaxed and easy-going atmosphere, enabling the *usrah* members to feel comfortable and relaxed instead of feeling like they are at a formal event.

When interviewed about her preparation in conducting the *usrah*, Ulya replied that:

Recently I attended a course conducted by Lembaga Maktab Mahmud called Nuqaba' Leadership at Pendang Lake Resort. Alhamdulillah, from this course I have been taught on how to be a good leader, who has to always show uswatun hasanah, gain knowledge about dakwah and know how to manage and conduct dakwah activities at school. Also, I have been taught about the contemporary challenges of daie, the role and responsibility of the daie and how to enhance self- confidence as a daie.

Within the *usrah*, the content of discussions is diverse, including things such as the *Quran* and Science, Islamic theories of life and creation, reason and Allah's mercy and so on. Some of the discussions reflected the women's lives – for example when they talked about Muslim women's history, they noticed that women played a key role in Islamic development. They discussed the comfort, counsel and advice that Khadijah⁵⁶ gave to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and how this meant that women were part of the support that led to the transmission of Islam, as well as how Muslim women gave treatment to patients during wars (Azam, 2006). Other discussions

⁵⁶ The first wife of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH

focussed on current Muslim issues, Islamic contemporary problems and *fiqh al- Marah* (Fiqh of Women).

Ulya and Salsabila have certain priorities in terms of Islamic education for this *usrah*, such as providing them with the tools to be brave; building confident about the choices they take; giving them the chance to ask questions and receive guidance; providing good social skills; and exploring their self- potential. From my observation, I have seen how she blends all these priorities during the circle's meetings, and transmits them to the girls attractively. One of the *usrah* members, Husna commented:

I love this circle because we have discussed a lot of stuff about Islam, such as faith, the main articles of Islam, aqidah, fiqh and so on. As we know, Islam is a way of life. So, through this usrah I have learnt how to apply Islam in my life. Another thing that I love about this usrah is because it brings a new approach in teaching instead of sitting in the classroom. I think this is more relaxing as it enables us to be closer to each other.

Adibah also added that:

Sometimes this usrah teaches us a lot about things that we don't learn inside the classroom. And we can question the leader straight away if we do not understand anything because the atmosphere is closer in terms of intimacy and we love each other just like one family

6.2.1.2.2.2 Data from the Interviews and a Focus Group

From the interview sessions and a focus group with the students, I have pointed out that majority of students agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities give four (4) impacts to their identity. This co-curricular and Islamic activities have

promoted them to have good *shaksiyah*; be active and brave; knowledgeable and build leadership skills. I will discuss each in the following paragraphs.

Shaksiyah

Developing good *shaksiyah Islamiyah* is a priority objective for the co-curricular and Islamic activities. There are various activities that promote good *shaksiyah* to the students, such as *usrah*, *tamrin*, mentor mentee, Islamic talks and so on. During the interviews, the students said as below:

Hidni:

The contents of the usrah, tamrin and so on is concerning on instilling good akhlak, shaksiyah Islamiyah. As Mahadians, we are ambassadors not for MM but also for Islam. These activities encourage us to be good Muslims with good akhlak and practice what we have learnt. I feel more conscious on the way I should behave. My relationship with Allah and with other human being. I want to be a true Muslimah.

Adibah:

These co-curricular and Islamic activities have impacted my shaksiyah in the sense that I become more aware about my aurah. During my standard school time, I just wore the hijab sometimes. But, after coming to this school, I start to wear it consistently. istiqomah... At the same time it is a reminder that ...o..I am covering the aurah so I have to behave accordingly. It is a real symbolism as a true Muslimah and I have to have a good shaksiyah Islamiyah.

The below pie chart shows that all the respondents agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities can develop *shaksiyah* to the students.

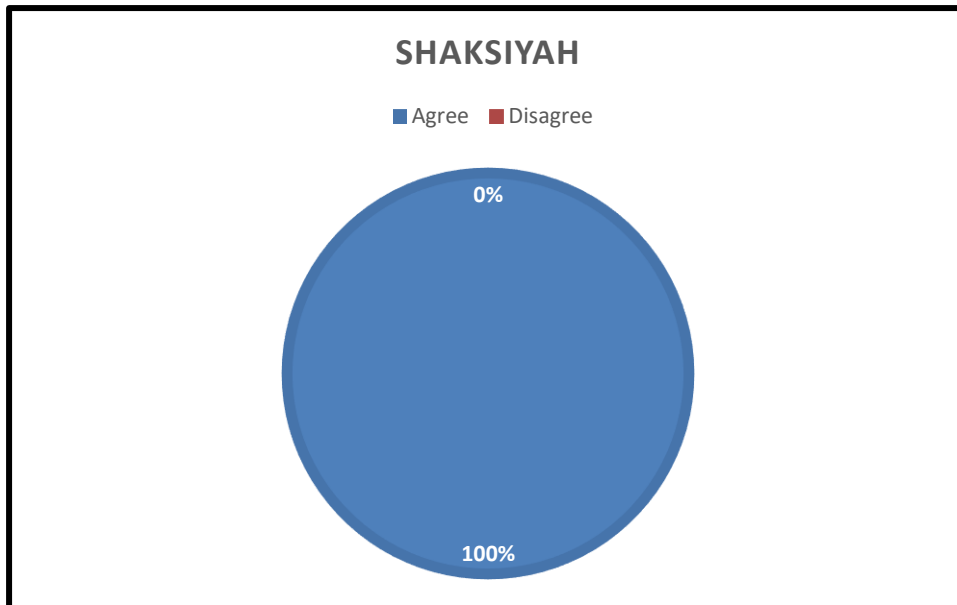


Figure 6.6: Shaksiyah

Active and Brave

Majority of the students agree that all the co-curricular activities and Islamic activities have encouraged them to be active and brave. The activities such as *Tilawah Al-Quran* competition and *Hafazan Al-Quran* competition and *Usrah* as mediums of exploring self-potential, developing self-confident and independence which led them to be active and brave. As commented by Hidni:

MM has provided a lot of activities that include the religious and community activities. The activities teach us how to be an independent, brave, and strong woman, and prepare us how to contribute to the local community after we graduate.

Fatihah added that:

In the classroom, it is so formal and sometimes a bit boring. On the other hand, in the co-curricular and other activities such as usrah, it is more relaxed and informal. We are free to ask any questions and the atmosphere is different from the other one. Thus, I personally feel excited, happy and more confident to voice up my opinion.

On the other hand, there were about 7 students who did not agree that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities encouraged them to be active and brave. As stated by students, Hidni and Adibah:

These Islamic activities have not really affected me in terms of to be a brave and an active student. I think these activities only provide tools to gain knowledge. That's all (Hidni).

I can not see that benefits (to be brave and active) in my self. Maybe it worked to others, but it is definitely not to me. I am a shy person (Adibah).

The pie chart below shows that 23 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities encouraged students to be active and brave.

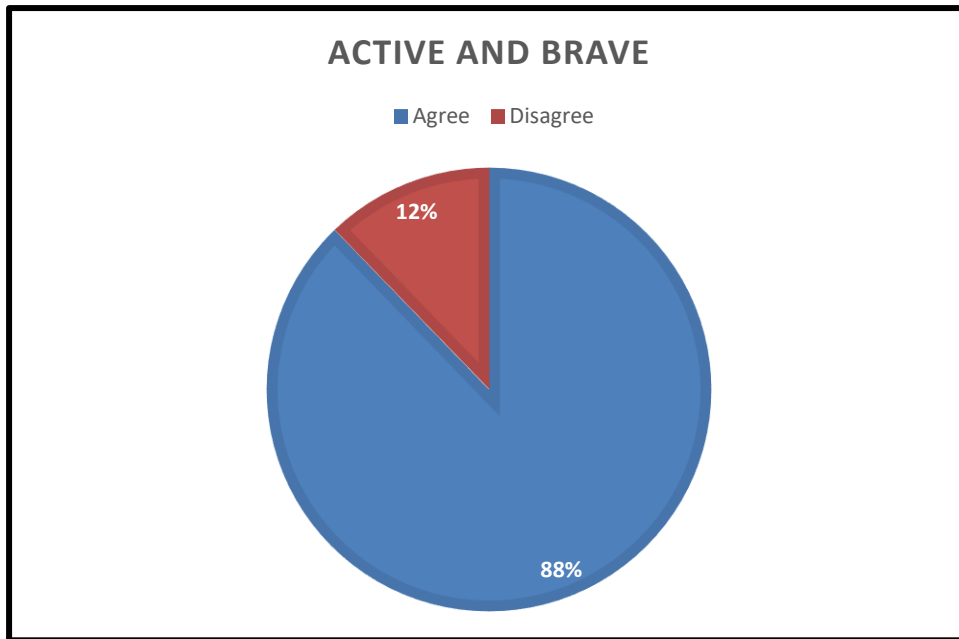


Figure 6.7: Active and Brave

Knowledgeable

The school's activities provide them places to gain knowledge. This was agreed by majority of the students. Among them are Qistina and Hidni. Their responses are as follows:

Qistina:

The school's activities provide us knowledge. For example, the school has held several talks by inviting speakers among prominent Muslim scholars. We frequently have assemblies for special days based on Islamic calendar, such as Mauliudur Rasul, Israk and Mikraj and so on. The school has invited speakers and inspirational scholars for such events.

Hidni:

We also have camping, usrah, tamrin and so on. So, the school provides a lot of activities that can lift our spirit to be more Islamic, knowledgeable, progressive and independent.

The pie chart below shows that 22 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities helped them to be knowledgeable students.

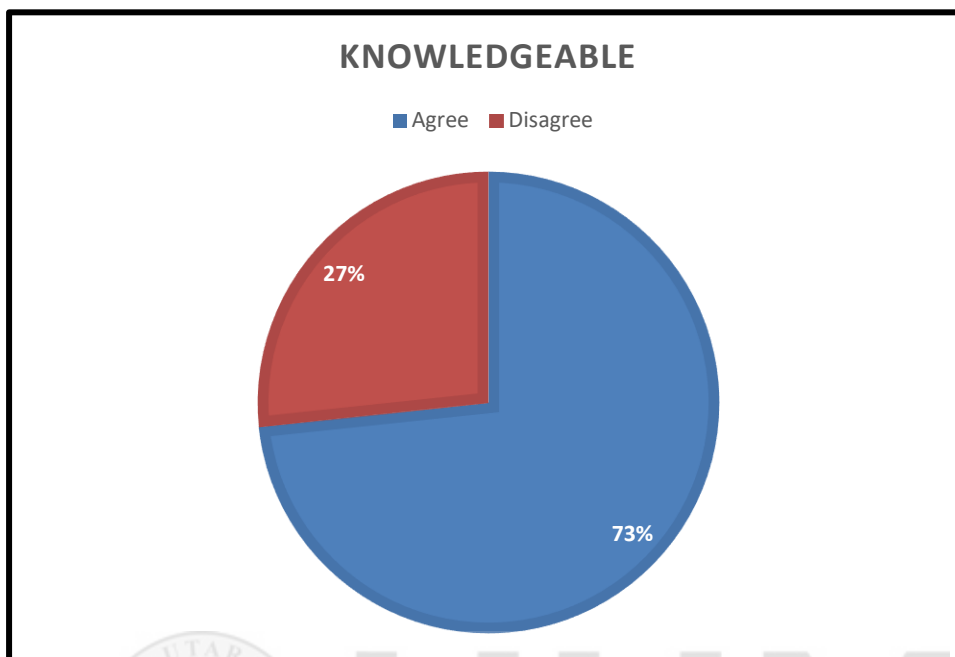


Figure 6.8: Knowledgeable

Build Leadership Skills

During the school hours, the students learn Islamic education based on syllabus designed by the government. Hence, during the co-curricular and Islamic activities, the school has taken this chance to build leadership skills amongst the students. These leadership skills are important for every student as a preparation to be a leader in the future as many of the alumni are the leaders in the public and private sectors and are also state stakeholders.

We also have students going out to the community, and be involved in the community, such as if any local schools need facilitators for students in their program, they will invite our students to be their facilitators. (Karimah, teacher, 36 years old).

Iwana said:

I am a bit shy before, but after involving in these activities, my self-esteem and confidence level are much better. It is because the activity such as nuqaba' leadership, course and usrah have trained us to be a good leader.

Basyirah:

In this school, everybody has chances to become a leader. Everybody should have leadership skills. We start from a small group in which a senior teaches the juniors in one group... the cycle begins... We also have school's club, organisations and uniforms that offer leadership skills.

The below pie chart shows that 24 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities can build students' leadership skills.

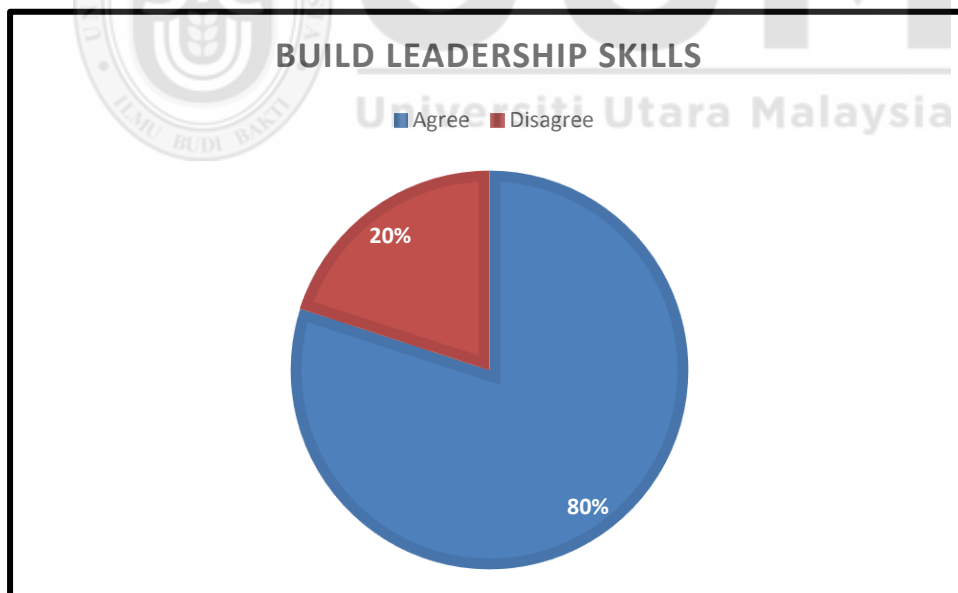


Figure 6.9: Build Leadership Skills

6.2.1.2.3 School's Culture

For the school's culture, I have divided this component into two (2) categories. They are reading culture and preservation of school's reputation. Indeed, the reading culture and school's reputation are among the main elements to maintain and preserve the school's culture. Below is the evidence.

Reading Culture

In the process of inculcating good Muslim identity to the students, reading Islamic spiritual book is one of the ways to achieve this process. Majority of the students agreed that by reading books they can learn about Islam, *sirah*, *adab* and *akhlak*. Even though they are also learning in the classroom, this method is only limited during the school hours. Hence, through books they can read it everywhere, anywhere and at any time. Furthermore, the school's library provides various type of Islamic spiritual books written by various Muslim scholars and authors. As claimed by Shuhada:

I love reading books. I have got a lot of information and knowledge about Islam. I can easily read it at any time, for example during gaps between two classes before the teacher comes or before I go to bed. Sometimes I borrow it from the school's library or sometimes, my parents gave them to me as presents. And of course, I find out about the author and his/her background first before I decide to read that book.

On the other hand, a few students did not agree with the statement as they claimed that they learn about *sirah*, *akhlak* and *adab* through media such as TV and Internet. Ainina insisted that:

Apart from the school's curriculum, I would learn about akhlak, adab and Islam through media such as the TV or internet. We have a lot of school text books to be read. Sometimes, it is boring. So, I

prefer to choose something different. I watch the TV or surf the internet instead.

The pie chart below shows that 27 out of 30 respondents agreed that the reading culture can help them to have the Islamic identity.

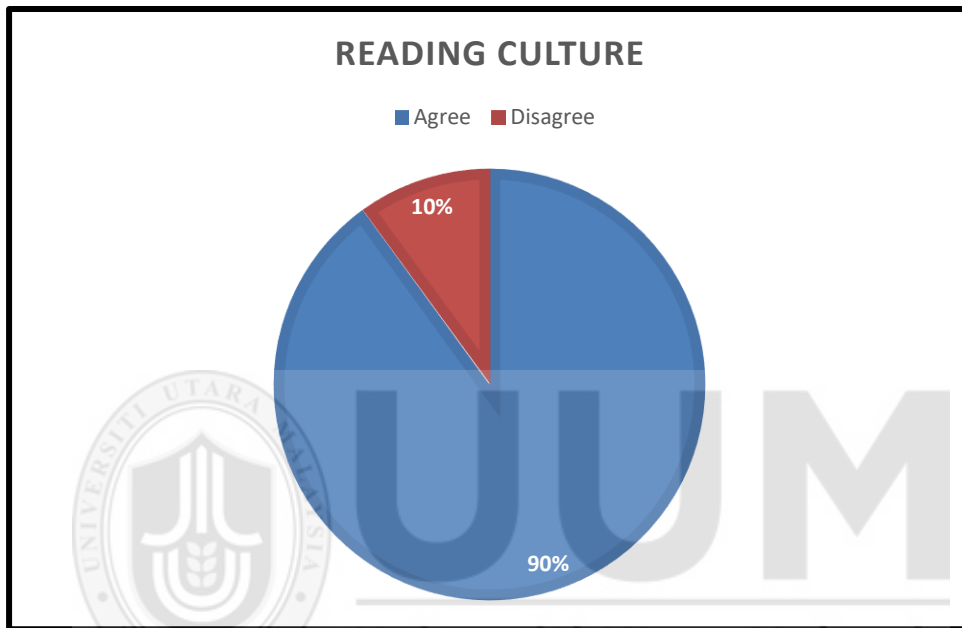


Figure 6.10: Reading Culture

To Preserve School's Reputation

MM is well-known as an Islamic school that has a good reputation especially in *akhlak* and academic achievement. The graduates of MM are generally seen by the local community as *ustaz* and *uztazah* who can teach Islam to the community. They have become role models to the community. To date, the school's reputation is considered as a legacy, hence the current students have to continue it to the next generations.

Majority of the students agreed that, the school's reputation has given impact to their identity. This is due to students' awareness about the questions of what does this school stand for? What are the perception and expectation of the outsiders towards the MM? What are the contributions of students in order to preserve and maintain the school's reputation? These questions have triggered students to have Muslim identity as a preservation of school's reputation.

The representative of lembaga Maktab Mahmud, Ustaz Shafie Ismail insisted that:

Our priority is to produce Al- Insan Al-Kamil. The academic excellent is a bonus for us. The barakah of the ulama who graduated from this school has flourished this school. The Alumni of the school has given good example to the current students. These ulama and the alumni are our benchmark in shaping the Muslim identity to the students today. I think these have made Maktab Mahmud still exist until today. Also, it is a huge responsibility to the Lembaga to maintain this legacy and to uphold the good name of this school.

A student, Shuhada said that:

I think this is our responsibility (students) to uphold the good name of MM. We have to be aware that we are Maahadians, thus, people out there are always looking at us. We should be a role model and qudwah hasanah to the others (local community). I am proud to be a Maahadian. Also, I am proud to know if a famous person on TV or media is an MM's alumnus. Our seniors and alumni mostly have become somebody in this country. So, they have inspired me to be like them.

The pie chart below shows that all of the 30 respondents agreed that the school's reputation has influenced their identity.

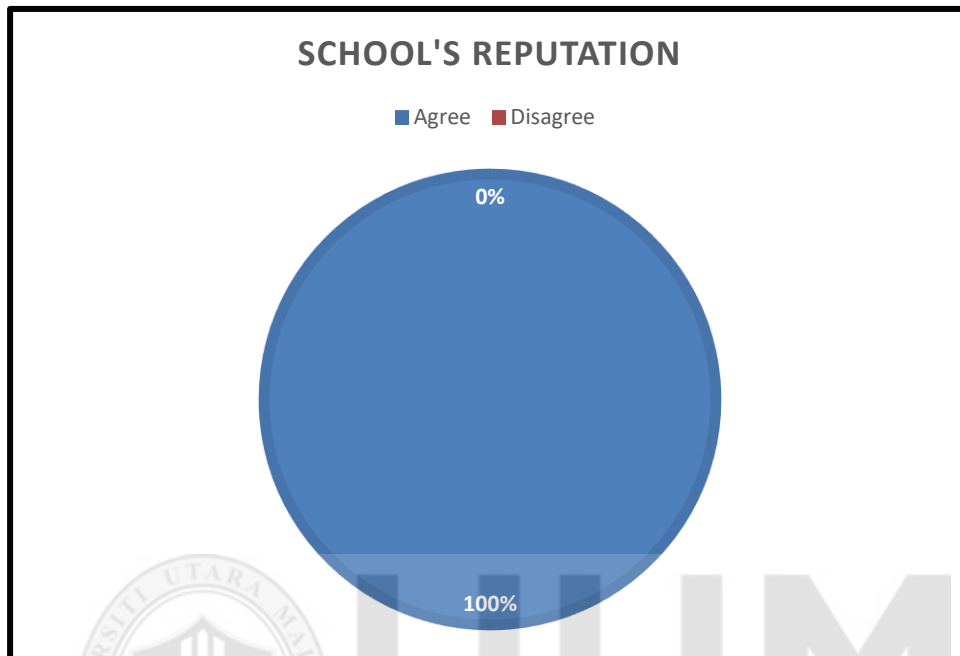


Figure 6.11: School's Reputation

6.2.1.2.4 Environment and Facilities

Most of the students agreed that the ethos and environment at this school has affected their identity to be a good student. The pie chart below shows that about 26 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's environment and facilities have affected their Muslim identity.

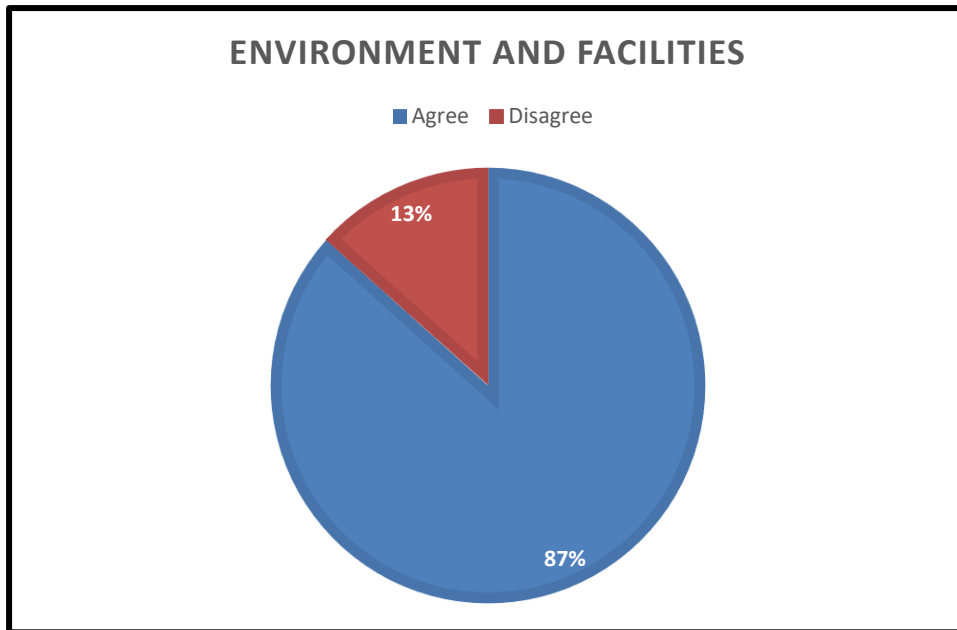


Figure 6.12: Environment and Facilities

The environment at this school includes the *biah* such as no *ikhtilat* between boys and girls, school's decoration and facilities. Each of these factors will be presented below.

No *Ikhtilat*

Most of the students agreed that the prohibition of mixing between boys and girls (*ikhtilat*) is the most important factor that can avoid them from committing social problem. One of the students commented:

What I like about this school is this school practice a total separation between boys and girls. There is no ikhtilat at all. So, it can prevent me from mixing freely with the boys. It is such a huge mistake if students resort to committing ikhtilat or dating boys. They will be dismissed from this school. (Farah).

Adibah also added:

The school has put so much effort in preventing the ikhtilat which include putting us in different canteen and, different building where there is no mixing at all. The rules and regulations have also stated that the ikhtilat is a big mistake. Everybody knows about it. It's also prohibited in Islam. It has made this school different from other schools in the sense that we know the muamalah between genders and how to preserve Islamic identity in ourselves and we can proudly say 'yes, Maktab Mahmud is very strict about free mixing between genders.

Decorations

The students also agreed that the decorations at this school have helped them to be a good Islamic student too. As Ibtisam commented:

What I like about this school is the decoration itself. We can see a lot of Quranic verses, the hadiths, the Islamic idioms along the corridor. It's such a reminder for me of what Allah allows and forbids. I think this is one of the factors that help me to be a good student. Maybe we think that it is just a small matter, yet it gives a significant impact to the character building. Addin Annasihah.

This has been agreed by another student, Husna, as she said that:

I like the decorations here, the Islamic calligraphies and the murals. It gives a peace of mind, boost the Islamic spirit and vibes. I think they really help the student to be aware that this is Maktab Mahmud, so we have to behave accordingly.

Musolla

Like other Muslim schools, Maktab Mahmud allows its students to perform *Salah* (prayers) that fall within the school hours congregationally in the *musolla*. The

facilities, especially the *musolla*, are used as a centre of developing the Muslim identity to the students. The role of *musolla* is not for prayer purposes per se, but as a place for Islamic activities like Islamic talks, *usrah*, *kitab*s session and as a place for group discussions. Auni said that:

The existence of musolla in this school is very important. It is not a place for performing ibadah only, but as an Islamic centre. There are various Islamic activities and programs inside there. Therefore, this musolla is very important in shaping our Islamic identity.

6.2.2 The Religious Education Subjects (RE)

MM provides an Integrated Islamic curriculum known as KBD (Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini), comprising *Usul al- Din*, *al- Syariah*, *al- Lughah al- Arabiah al- Mu'asirah*, *al- Manahij al-Ulum al- Islamiyyah* and *al- Adab wa al- Balaghah*. It is believed that this KBD can help in the shaping of students' identity at school.

6.2.2.1 Data from the Observation

The Islamic ethos is also integrated into the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Teachers have created an Islamic atmosphere in the classroom by trying to integrate the values of Islam in the teaching. For example, throughout my observation of a form four class for *Syariah Al- Islamiyyah* lesson, I observed that the lesson began and ended with *du'a* (supplicatory prayers) and recitation. The students were well-behaved, and gave the teacher their full attention. They listened carefully to the teachers and gave full attention to the class without any command from the teacher. In many lessons, the teachers made links with Islamic values. Before the teacher leaves the class, every student shakes hands with the teacher. This environment is rarely seen in other schools. During interviews, the students answered the questions politely,

frequently saying *assalamualaikum* (peace be upon you) during the first meeting, *bismillah* (in the name of Allah) before answering the first question of the interview, and *salam* after finishing the interview.

The MM school fully implements the Integrated Curriculum (Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah, KBSM) and Integrated Islamic Curriculum, (Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini, KBD) and adheres very closely to the attainment targets and programmes of study. The KBD was designed by Curriculum Board Committee, Ministry of Education (MOE), Advisory Board of Education and Religious Education (LEPAI, Lembaga Penasihat Pelajaran dan Pendidikan Agama Islam), and Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, (JAKIM, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia). The KBD was introduced to the State Religious School, (SAN, Sekolah Agama Negeri), Private Religious School (SAR, Sekolah Agama Rakyat) and Government-Aided Religious School (SABK, Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan) in 2015. The MOE, JAKIM and LEPAI have provided textbooks for KBD subjects and all these textbooks are written in Arabic. The using of arabic language is significant to show the privilege of Islam and the Islamic terminologies.

This KBD was planned in order to produce *muthaqqaf ulama* or Muslim scholars in the future. The MOE believes that through this KBD the students can preserve, sustain and prevent Islam from deviant teachings such as Islamic State Militants (IS), and DAESH⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ Acronym of the group's full Arabic name, al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham, translated as "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (or the Levant).

In the KBD, the five main strands of *Usul al- Din*, *al- Syariah*, *al- Lughah al- Arabiah al- Mu'asirah*, *al- Manahij al-Ulum al- Islamiyyah* and *al- Adab wa al- Balaghah* are infused into the curriculum. These five subjects represent fundamental knowledge that every Muslim is expected to learn. When asked about the importance of these subjects, a teacher commented that:

These KBD subjects are very important to the students especially nowadays where there are a lot o bad examples and bad influences. So, subjects such as Usul al- Din and al- Syariah taught them how to preserve theirf Islamic identity, to be a good muslimah while al- Lughah al- Arabiah al- Mu'asirah, al- Manahij al-Ulum al- Islamiyyah and al- Adab wa al- Balaghah are the heritage and privilege of Islam that every Muslim should learn and preserve. So, by learning KBD they can be truly Muslims as a Malay idiom says, “merentung buluh biar dari rebungnya” This is our main concern.. I hope the students do not only learn but practice Islam in their life. I think this knowledge is not for themselves per se, but they can spread it to their family and their community in the future. Insha Allah.. (Aminah, 42 years old).

6.2.2.2 Data from the Interviews and a Focus Group

From the data gathered through the interviews and a focus group, majority of the students agreed that the RE subjects have helped them to realize the status, rights and role of women in Islam and to improve their attitude and identity. Below is the evidence.

6.2.2.2.1 Realize the Status, Rights and Role of Women in Islam

Indeed, the RE has motivated the students to be active, educated and professional women in the future. One of the students, Auni said that:

I am happy to study RE subjects. I learn a lot about Islam from these subjects. For example, in Sirah we learn about the history of Islam, our prophets, the wife of the prophet like Khadijah, Aisyah and so on. They were strong, brave and educated women. I have been inspired to be like them. Before, many people said that women should stay at home, be busy with house chores and the upbringing of the children. But actually, Islam has upgraded the status of women. Women also can be involved in the society, do dakwah and gain knowledge as what the wife of the prophet did before.

Syamira, a student also added that:

Many people out there do not know that in the history of Islam, women have contributed a lot in dakwah. I want to be like Aishah, who was bright, educated, brave and strong. Inshaallah, one day I want to give something back to the society.

Syamail commented that:

Through Sirah we learn a lot about the sacrifice and contributions of women to Islam such as Khadijah, Aishah, Fatimah, Asma', Hafsa, and many more. They have inspired me to be like them. Today, I think what I can do is to do da'wah to the community, give talk, teach and help people. The da'wah arena is mostly dominated by men. So, women also should take part in this da'wah because many women out there need help from us, it is like 'women- to- women- talk'. This is more appropriate especially when we discuss fiqh al- mar 'ah and other women issues in Islam and society.

Zakirah insisted that:

The RE subjects really help me in character building. At the same time, it has motivated me to be a good muslimah. Da'wah needs both men and women. Before, I thought that women have been marginalized in doing da'wah because it is a men's job. But, after I study in MM, I realized that, women also should take part in da'wah and community. Women should not stay at home only, but women should go outside and give something back to Islam. This is parallel to women's fitrah, not against the limitation of women as ruled by Islam. This means that women must be active and strong but at the same time, the Muslim women must know how to do muamalah between genders, cover the aurah and preserve the status of Muslim women.

The below pie chart shows that 23 out of 30 respondents agreed that the RE subjects made them realize about the status, right and role of Muslim women.

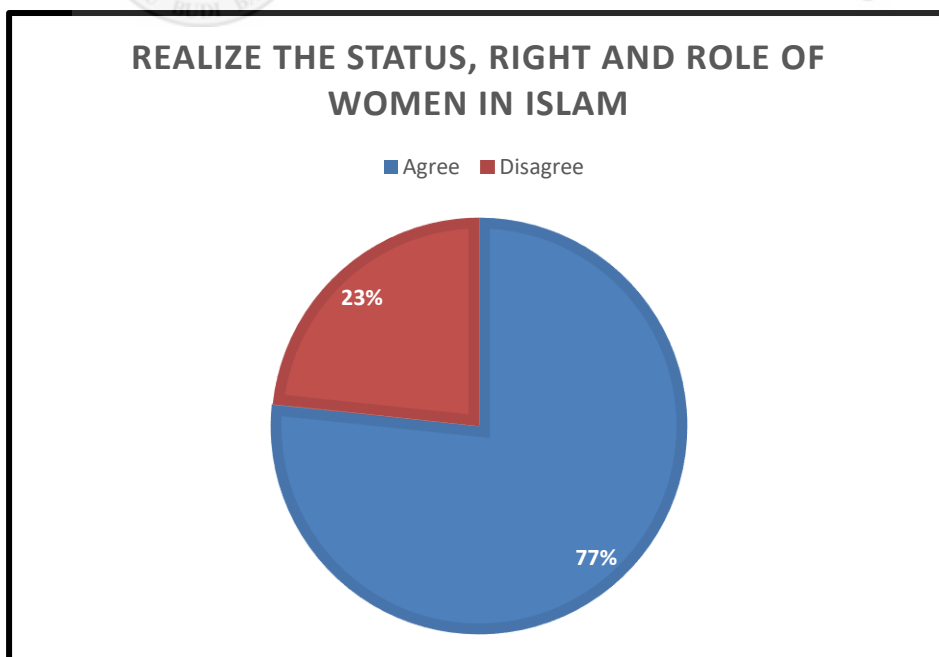


Figure 6.13: Realize the Status, Right and Role of Women in Islam

6.2.2.2 Improve their Attitude and Identity

There are marked differences between the forms that Islamic education takes at state schools and at MM, as the teaching aims are not the same. In state schools, Islam is taught as an examination subject, but at MM it is taught as a responsibility to Allah rather than a responsibility to the school. Thus, it aims to develop the understanding of Islam and the application of Islamic principles in everyday life. The Islamic Studies teacher, Rahimah, 38 years old, stressed this point during an interview:

I have an experience teaching at SMK schools, and I can see the differences in terms of akhlak, personality and identity between both schools (SMK and MM) ... I think the KBD subjects have influenced them in character building. For example, in KBD we have subjects like Usuludin, which concerns about tauhid, tafsir, hadis, sirah and akhlak... In every strand (Usuludin, Syariah, Lughah, Manahij and Adab) we have many sub-topics to be taught. It is more detailed and the SMKs do not offer these subjects at school. So, I think this is what makes MM students good. They have the x-factor.

The RE subjects impacted on the pupils' characters and aim to make them better people, better Muslim girls and thus to become better Muslim women. Such teaching aims to have an impact on them as people, rather than to just help them to achieve academic success. The RE teacher, Jamilah, 36 years old, said that:

This RE subjects give impact to the students' character. The purpose of the RE itself is to produce a good Muslim and encourage the students to be better people and better Muslimah. This is what I want in every student. I want them to succeed in character and morals and at the same time they succeed academically.

A teacher said that:

It does not matter how successful the person is, if they are not successful in their deen, then they are not successful in this world. The objective of MM is to produce insan kamil. I always remind my students in the class about this matter. I think I am more grateful if my students are good in akhlak, humble, and full of respect. The RE subjects are really important for every student (Rahimah).

In the students' perspective, Nurin, commented that:

I have got an excellent result in PT3 and I have got an offer from a boarding school. But I refuse to study there because in here I got both, dunia and akhirat knowledge. My parent wants me to be an educated and a religious daughter.

When Asked about the subject which influenced them the most in character building. Most of the students responded that *Usul al- Din* and *al- Syariah* have gave big influenced to them in forming Muslim Identity. Below are the responds.

Bahirah said:

I love all the subjects, but the ones that influence me a lot are Usul al- Din and al- Syariah. For example, in Usul al- din, I learn Tauhid, Tafsir, Hadis, Sirah and Akhlak. In Tauhid we learn about the oneness of god, Tafsir- the intrepertation of Quran, Hadis- everything about words of the prophet, Sirah- the history of Islam and Akhlak- adab and manner. All of these subjects give significant impact to the characters in the sense that they give lesson and ibrah to the students. Specifically for akhlak, it teaches us how to behave accordingly based on the Quran and Sunnah. In Sirah, we learn about the history of Islam, the men and women behind the succes of spreading Islam and it really makes me appreciate the Islam as it has survived until today.

Najihah commented that:

The subjects that influenced me a lot are Usul al- Din and al-Syariah. In Usuludin we learn everything about Islam such as Tauhid, Sirah, Tafsir, Akhlak and Hadis. On the other hand, in Syariah, we learn about Fiqh Ibadat, Fiqh Munakahat, Fiqh Muamalat and Fiqh Jinayat. This syariah is focusing on the dos and don'ts in islam. We should learn those things because this is our law and it acts as a guidance for us to live in this world.

Saiidah said that:

Every subject has its benefit. But, in terms of character building, I agree that the subject of Usuludin is very important. Through this subject, I learn about the substance of Islam. It is very helpful especially when it comes to the formation of Muslim identity.

Qistina also added that:

In this subject (Usuludin) especially for Sirah and Akhlak, they really teach us on how to be a good Muslimah. In Sirah for example, the story of Khadijah and Aishah have really inspired me as a woman. I become more motivated to be a good Muslimah who is also active, brave and strong just like them.

The below pie chart shows that 23 out of 30 respondents agreed the RE subjects have improved their attitude and identity.

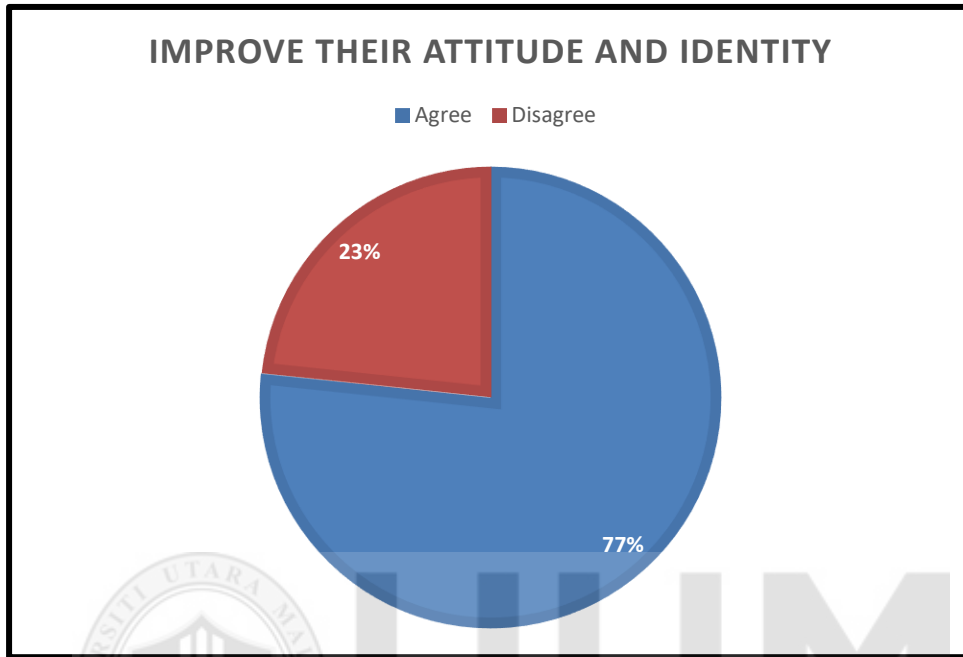


Figure 6.14: Improve their Attitude and Identity

6.2.3 Role Model

Apart from the school ethos and environment and the RE subjects, the role model also has played a significant role in shaping the students' identity. The role models refer to the teachers themselves. Many of the students agreed that the teachers as role models have influenced their identity. Throughout the interviews, it was shown that they felt happy and comfortable in the school because they have role models whom inspire them. The teachers are seen by the students to provide positive role models and share common religious values and culture.

At MM, majority of the teachers are alumni of the MM. Thus, these teachers have brought the legacy of MM in terms of spirituality to the students. The head teacher said that:

Most of the teachers are the alumni of MM. So, they can bring all the culture and values during their time to the students today. Maybe the challenge is different as today we have a lot of social problems in the society, but, the teachers can always instil the spirit of Maahadians to the students. When students are aware that they are Maahadians, they know their responsibility to Allah, family, school and society. MM has a big and good brand in our community.

6.2.3. 1 The Qualities of a Teacher to Become a Role Model

Majority of the students agreed that teachers become their role models because of three criteria; *qudwah hasanah*, knowledgeable and charismatic.

6.2.3.1.1 *Qudwah Hasanah*

During an interview, a student, Salsabila, pointed out that:

*The teachers here are all my role models. They have good characters, akhlak and have fulfilled all the criteria to be a role model. They show *qudwah hasanah* to the students, no matter where they are; whether in the classroom, in the staff room or outside the school compound.*

Interestingly, Nadia 47 years old and Diana, 31 years old, both of them are teachers, view the importance of MM to be grounded in its providing Islamic role models for the children as a result of practicing Muslim teachers. It is undeniable that, during their teenage years, children imitate their role models.

Apart from teaching, I also become a role model to the students. We know of the words Murabbi, Muaddib, Murshid, Muallim. So, I think this is what every teacher should try to be. We spent about 8 hours a day with the students, so we should portray a good example to the students (Nadia).

If we want students to be good, the teachers have to give good example, uswatun hasanah to the students. It is like a checked box, they will check the boxes if the teachers fulfil the criteria of role model. In the classroom for example, the teachers teach about akhlak, adab and all about good deeds, so as a teacher we should embrace all the teachings. We must act what we preached. In this school, inshaAllah...the students have good role models, so I am very happy in that aspect. (Diana).

The below pie chart shows that 21 out of 30 respondents agreed that *qudwah hasanah* is one of the main criteria to be a role model.

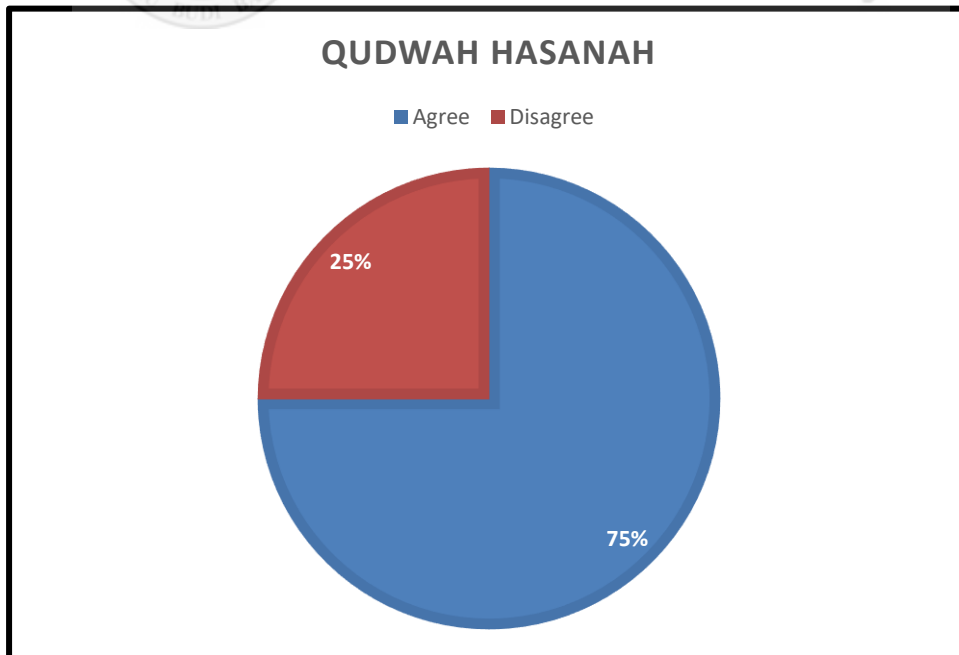


Figure 6.15: *Qudwah Hasanah*

6.2.3.1.2 Knowledgeable

According to MM students, knowledgeable has become one of the criteria to become a role model. At MM, the head teacher claimed that they recruit qualified, observing Muslim teachers, who are all specialists in their subject areas.

The teachers here were recruited by the Lembaga. The Lembaga has a very strict criterion in recruiting teachers. They do not only look at the academic background per se but also the Islamic personality, character and identity of the teachers. All the teachers here have very good academic background with some of them with master's degree. Besides, they also have been attending trainings and courses in their subject areas.

Majority of the students agree that role models should be knowledgeable. It is because the knowledge has become a benchmark in knowing the degree of teacher's expertise and skills. As stated by a student, Najihah that:

My role model is like an encyclopaedia. She knows everything. In that sense, it makes me think, when and how she manages her time in gaining knowledge despite her busy routine at school and I guess at home too. So it makes me reflect myself. I cannot be lazy. I have to keep learning and reading to become knowledgeable.

The pie chart below shows that 27 out of 30 respondents agreed to be a knowledgeable is one of the main criteria to be a role model.

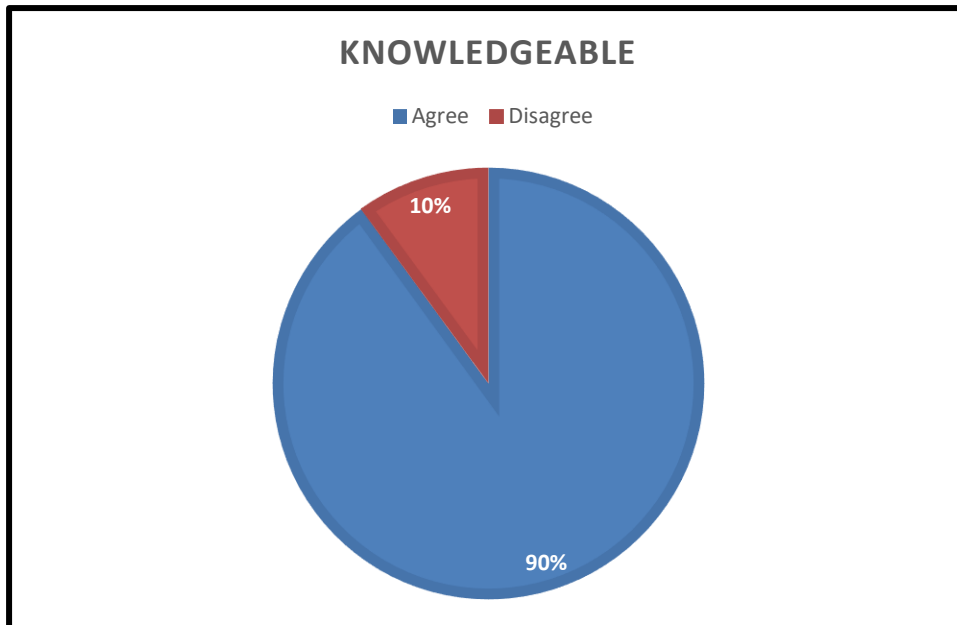


Figure 6.16: Knowledgeable

6.2.3.1.3 Charismatic

Throughout the interview with the students, majority of them agreed that charismatic is important to become a role model. Below are the quotations.

Rina:

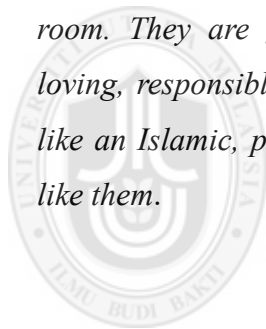
They are my role models, not in the personality and identity per se... but also in terms of future undertakings. For example, they are Islamic and pious women, but also very active, professional and give contributions to the community. Previously, many people say that women should stay home, cannot pursue study at the tertiary level, and even cannot get a job, but today my role models proved that they are Muslim women who observe Islam closely yet are educated, professional and active in the public sphere. I hope I can be like them too.

Tahlia:

To be a Muslim woman, a wife and a teacher is not an easy job. These teachers proved to me that we have to plan our chores wisely. A Muslim woman should go outside, go to the community and give something back to the community. The teachers give me a lot of motivation and encouragement. This is what I got from this school apart from the academic purpose.

Liza:

Through the teachers' personality and identity, it gives me an example that should to be followed and inspired. The way they dress up, talk and interact with people gives an inspiration for me. The teachers are my role models at school because every day I can simply see them in the classroom, canteen and even at the staff room. They are great teachers, who are professional, friendly, loving, responsible and progressive. I hope in the future I can be like an Islamic, professional, educated and active Muslim woman like them.



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The below pie chart shows that all of 30 respondents agreed the charismatic is one of the main criteria to be a role model.

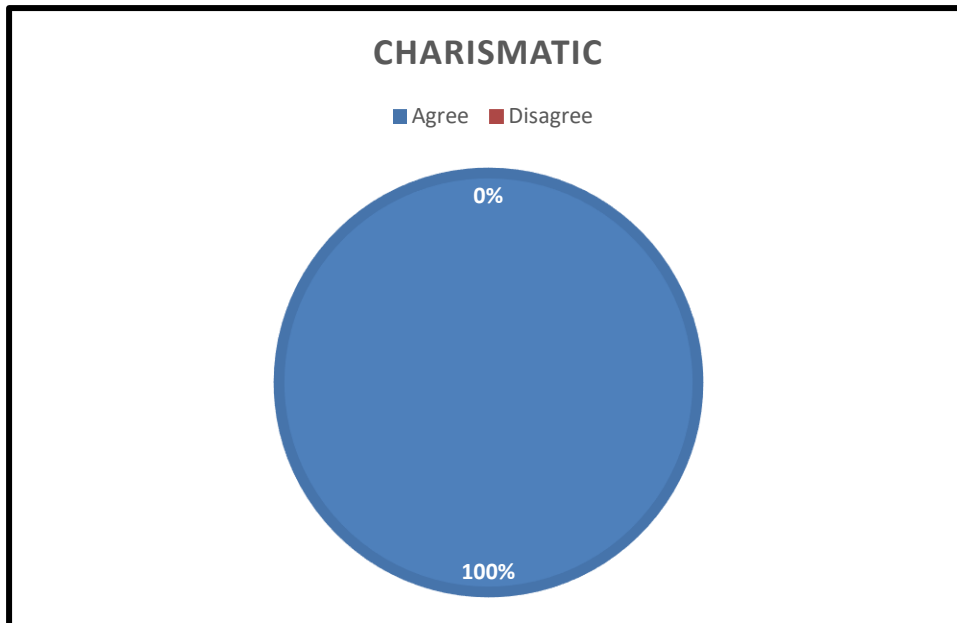


Figure 6.17: Charismatic

6.2.3.2 The Impacts of Role Model to their Identity

Throughout the interviews, majority of the students agreed that, the role models impacted their identity. Thus, I have pointed out 2 (two) favorite answers of the students. They are first; to be a better person, and second; discipline.

6.2.3.2.1 Be a Better Person

A student, Rina said:

When I came here for the first time, I saw all the teachers were very religious and pious. Then, I hoped I can be like them. From day to day, the teachers teach and guide me to be a good student. They give good example in formal and informal, conscious and unconscious way... They always be my best role models. Alhamdulillah...today I slowly adapt the Islamic culture and value of this school, particularly in dressing.

The below pie chart shows that 27 out of 30 respondents agreed the role mode encouraged them to be a better person.

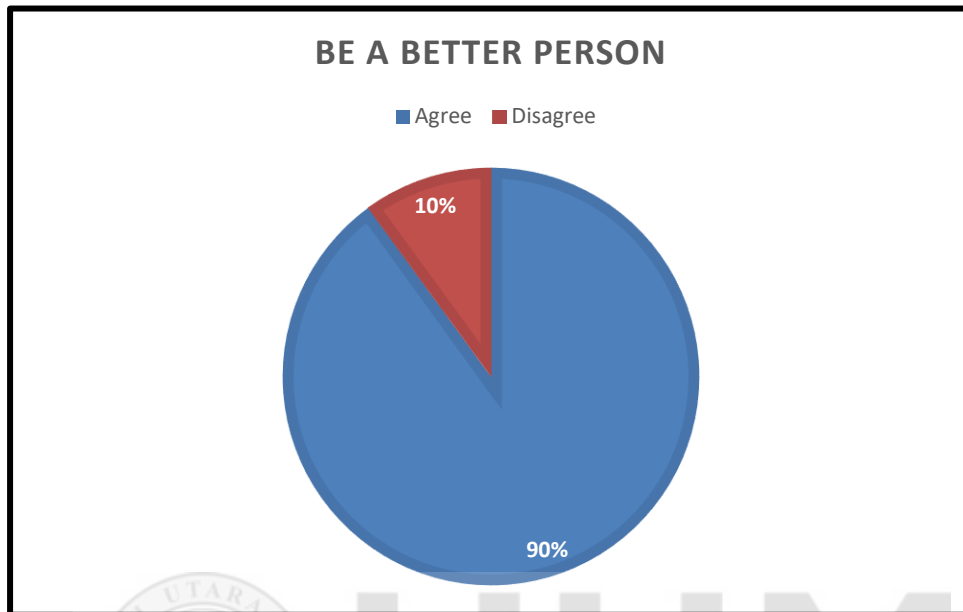


Figure 6.18: Be a Better Person

6.2.3.2.2 Discipline

A student, Ulfah claimed that:

Role models affected my behaviour. They make me more disciplined. I believe that the tool of success is discipline. Discipline is a magic word indeed. For example, I have to finish the homework, read Quran every day, be punctual and wake up earlier in the morning. It is because, I always ask myself, what I would I be in 10 years later? Will I become successful like my role models (Islamic, educated and have a career)? Of course, I would not succeed if I do not have discipline.

The below pie chart shows that 29 out of 30 respondents agreed the role mode encouraged them to be a disciplined student.

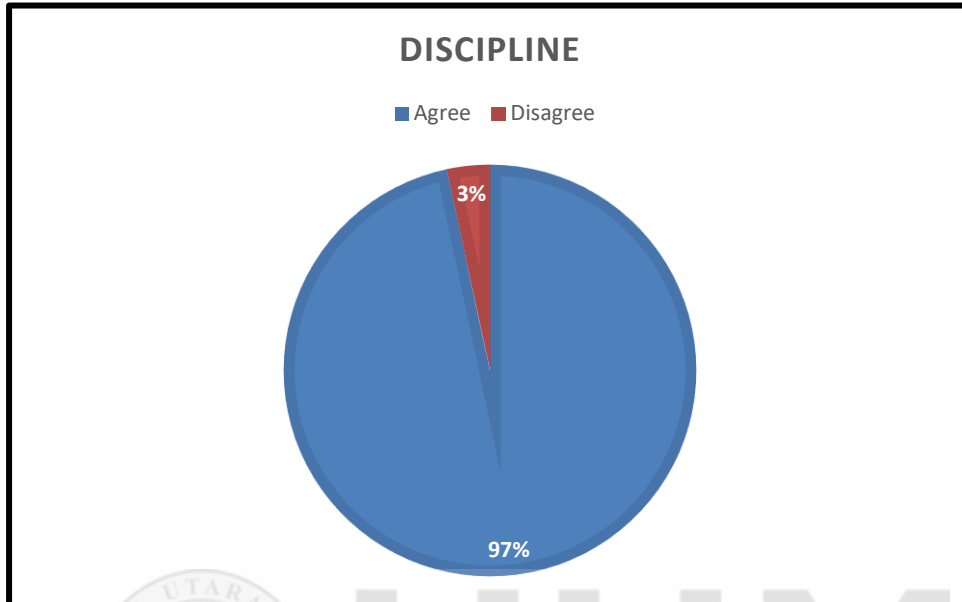


Figure 6.19: Discipline

6.2.3.3 Future Contributions to the Society after Finishing Study

Based on the data gathered, I noticed that majority of the students responded that first; they want to open free Islamic classes for Islamic knowledge, second; do *dakwah* and finally to establish Islamic organisations, funds or charities for Muslim community.

6.2.3.3.1 Open Free Islamic Classes

A student, Fatimah said that:

After I finish study and master my knowledge, I want to open free Islamic classes to people. As a Muslim woman, we need Muslim women scholars to discuss women matters such as fiqh al- Mar ah, atthoharah (cleanliness) and so on. Inshaallah, by opening free Islamic classes to all people, it will give chances to ordinary people to share, ask or raise any issues or problems. We need this

kind of classes and for sure we need more Muslim women scholars nowadays.

6.2.3.3.2 Do Dakwah

A student, Ibtisam claimed that:

Nowadays, the dakwah arena is mostly dominated by men. In recent society today, we also need Muslim women in dakwah. It helps to prevent society from committing sin. Even though this dakwah job has many challenges, as a strong Muslim woman, I hope I can face them. Indirectly, I can change people's perception about the role of women in doing dakwah.

6.2.3.3.3 Establish Islamic Organisations, Funds or Charities for Muslim Community

During interviews with students, majority of the students claimed that they want to be involved in NGO or establish Islamic organisations, to provide funds or charities for Muslim community. Among them, a student, Zakirah claimed that:

I wish I can give contributions to the Muslim society. For example, by helping the needy people, doing charity works and others. By doing this, the non- Muslim people can see that Muslim people, both men and women, are very active in reaching out the community.

The below pie chart shows that 14 respondents wanted to open free Islamic classes, 9 respondents planned to do dakwah and 7 respondents planned to establish organisation, funds and charities for Muslim society.

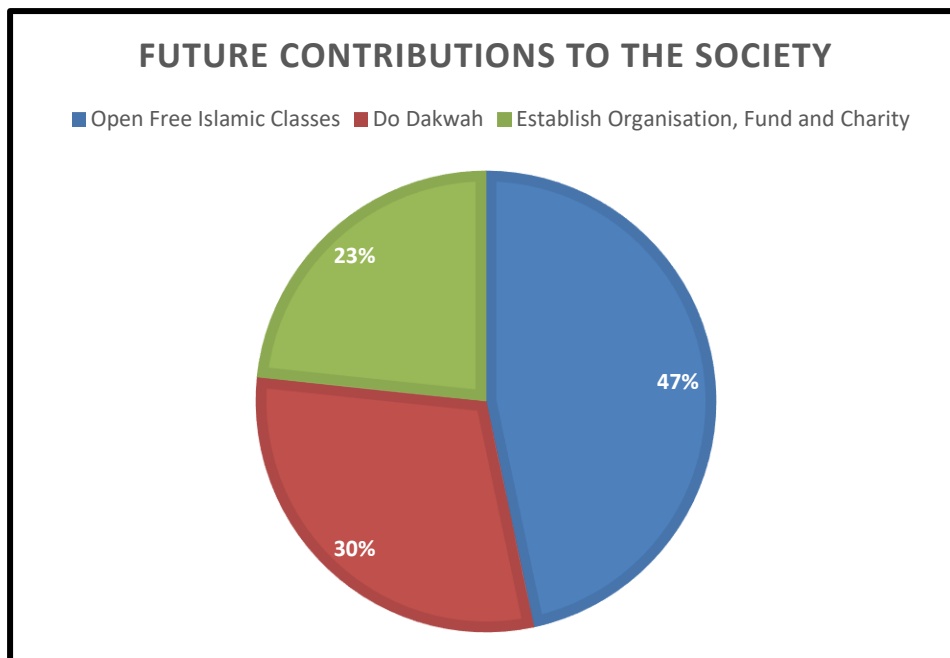


Figure 6.20: Future Contributions to the Society

6.2.4 Conclusion

The ethos and environment, RE subjects and role models at MM are tools in shaping the Muslim identity to the students. Throughout my observation, interviews and other data collection, it was found this school has catered all the needs of Muslim parents which is to educate their daughters to be excellent both in academic performance and identity. In fact, the ethos and environment, RE and role models at MM have made this school different, yet privileged and special as compared to other SMKs in Kedah. These three aspects have led the MM producing students with Muslim identity. The discussion and debate on how these mechanisms work will be discussed in chapter 6.

6.3 New Horizon Girls' School (NHCS)

NHCS formerly the Islamia Girls High School – is an independent Muslim girls' school on the border of Chapel Allerton and Chapeltown, Leeds. This school provides a space for Muslim girls to learn the national and Islamic curriculum in an Islamic environment. In this case study, the research focuses on the role of the school in shaping Muslim women identity to its students by examining its environment and ethos, its RE subjects, and its teachers as role models to the students.

6.3.1 The Environment and Ethos of NHCS

The Islamic environment and ethos at this school can be seen through its' decoration, facilities, activities and the school's vibe. Below is the data gathered from the observations, interviews and a focus group to explore how the environment and ethos are being constructed and the impact of the school's ethos and environment to the students' identity.

6.3.1.1 Data from the Observation

Before I managed to put my foot in the NHCS building, I had to search my way to find the school, as it did not have a large clear sign identifying it from the road. The first time I looked at the building from the gate, it looked like a dull, quiet and boring environment. The school is located in a large old Victorian building and its sign was at its gate, which could not be seen from a distance. There were no staff on duty, so I just passed through the gate with an uneasy feeling. I eventually found the intercom button on the front door of the building, and soon after I introduced myself, I received permission to enter the building, which has an automatic door that requires opening from inside. When I entered, I was surprised to find that the environment was totally

different inside, with many children and staff walking around, and offering me a polite *salam*. There was the feeling of a calm, warm and friendly atmosphere in the school.

The children seemed excited when I first came to NHCS, and offered me a polite *salam* and a wave even though I was a stranger at that time. Through working at NHCS, I have seen that the teachers try as hard as possible to implement Islamic values and culture in their day-to-day lives, ensuring that the environment is promoting Islamic values. I was very impressed with the effort made by NHCS to create an Islamic environment and ethos. The Islamic environment, ethos and ‘vibe’ are one of the ways to make it different from the non-Muslim school environment. The first thing that suggests that this is a Muslim institution is the NHCS community’s clothing, with everyone covering the *aurah*. Secondly, Islamic greetings are routinely used in NHCS school life. I could see that the students and staff would say ‘*salaam*’ rather than ‘hi’, and ‘*jazakallah/killah*’ instead of ‘thank you’. Thirdly, *Quranic* recitation will be played throughout the school before lessons start. This *Quranic* recitation lifts the Islamic spirit of the school community here, and helps students to realize that Islam is their *Deen* and the *Quran* is their book. One of the students commented:

What I like about this school is when I can hear the Quran everywhere. It really touched my heart and makes me realize who I am. It makes me remember Allah, our prophet and lifts the spirit to be a better Muslim. It’s something so emotional that’s really hard to tell you the exact feeling. (Fareeda).

The Islamic ethos is also portrayed through the Islamic student uniform. All the students are required to wear a white *hijab* and shirt, and long black pinafore, blazer

and shoes. The use of cosmetics is strictly forbidden in the school. During Physical Activity, the students are required to cover the *aurah*, and must wear a long-sleeved T-shirt, small scarf, trainers and tracksuit bottoms (School Uniform, see <http://newhorizonschool.co.uk/index.php/schooluniform>. Retrieved on 5th July 2014)).

The NHCS's building is adequately maintained and comprises eight classrooms, two computer suites, a gym, a library, a playground, a prayer hall, a science lab, a staff room and the school office. The NHCS reflects its Islamic character through its decorations and environment, such as *Quranic* verses, *hadiths*, poems and proverbs and Islamic calligraphy on the school walls and classrooms, and boards full of Islamic displays. In the hall, for instance, there was information about Muslims in Britain, and articles about Islam and faith.

6.3.1.2 Data from the Interviews and a Focus Group

From the data gathered from the interviews and a focus group, I have divided this section into four aspects. They are school's rules and regulations, school's co-curricular activities, school's culture and school's environment and facilities. I will discuss each in the following paragraphs.

6.3.1.2.1 School's Rules and Regulations

The rules and regulations of the school is one of the factors that affected the students' identity. Moreover, these rules and regulations are also in tandem with the objectives and vision and mission of the school. The aims and objectives of the NHCS are in line with British government policies. According to the NHCS's website, these are:

- i. New Horizon Community School seeks to develop positive identities in pupils. We aim to produce British Muslims who are prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally, spiritually and physically to succeed as leaders in tomorrow's world.
- ii. New Horizon pupils are expected to integrate academic skills, *Quranic* principles, and ethical behaviour in order to make positive contributions to the global community.
- iii. New Horizon aims to develop in each pupil a balanced character enriched with knowledge, inspired to excellence and committed to the betterment of family, community and humanity. (Home, see <http://newhorizonschool.co.uk>. Retrieved on 5th July 2014).

The above aims and requirements are said to be carefully imparted in the curriculum and ethos of the school, which I shall assess later based on my observations and interviews within the school community.

The below pie chart shows that all of 30 respondents agreed that the school's rules and regulations impacted their identity.

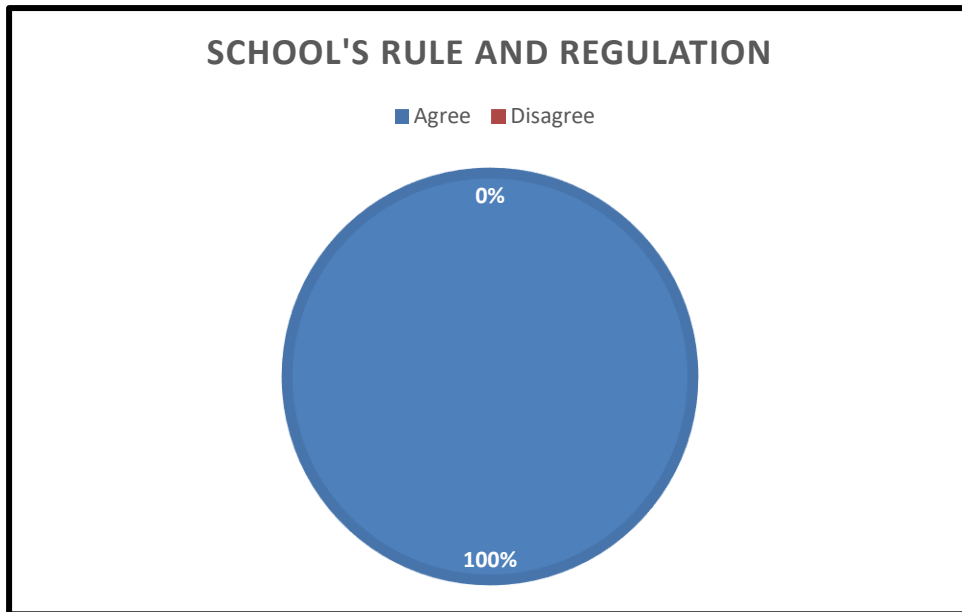


Figure 6.21: School's Rules and Regulations Impacted Students' Identity

From the interviews session with the students, I have pointed out that majority of students agreed that the school's rules and regulations give three impacts to their identity. They are in terms of *shaksiyah*, tolerance and respect.

Shaksiyah

During the interviews with the students, all of them responded that the school's rules and regulations helped them to be a good *Muslimah* in the sense that the school's uniform is covering the *aurah*. It makes them feel better, and that they see it as a symbol of a true Muslim woman (cf Metcalf 1997: 185). Indeed, all of them also consistently wear *hijab* outside the school's premise. Students said:

Ulfah:

I never wore hijab before, but after coming to this school, I started to wear hijab as the school regulations required me to wear hijab [...] Then, day-by-day, I got used to it and [started to] feel comfortable with the hijab.

Huda:

I am proud to wear this uniform. This makes me different from the other girls at state schools. This uniform makes people know that I study at a Muslim school, and I am a Muslim!

Shabnam:

Whenever I went to school, I felt like I had to hide my religion. I never wore the hijab and when I came home I put it on straight away, because I felt ashamed of not wearing it. So I wore it quickly. I was really sad, I had a horrible time during my primary school. When I was in secondary school (now), Alhamdulillah, the environment is much different. I wore a hijab, and have many Muslim friends.

The school's board is aware that Islam incorporates an ethical value-system, and that students can get into trouble if an Islamic education is not transmitted to them properly. During my time as a participant observer at this school, I also managed to organise a focus group with a group of students regarding living in a non-Muslim society. They argued that social problem has become a major concern because it may influence their behaviour. When asked about whether rules and regulations at school is important or not, a majority of these students said that they provide the best way to deal with this social problem, as well as with outside influences such as westernisation and secularisation. A student, Noura said that:

There are a lot of horrible things happening. We are surrounded by an unhealthy environment. So, it is important for this school to have a set of regulations that make us aware what the deen (Islam) is and to not move students far away from their deen

The pie chart below shows that all of 30 respondents agreed that the school's rules and regulations can develop good *shaksiyah* to the students.

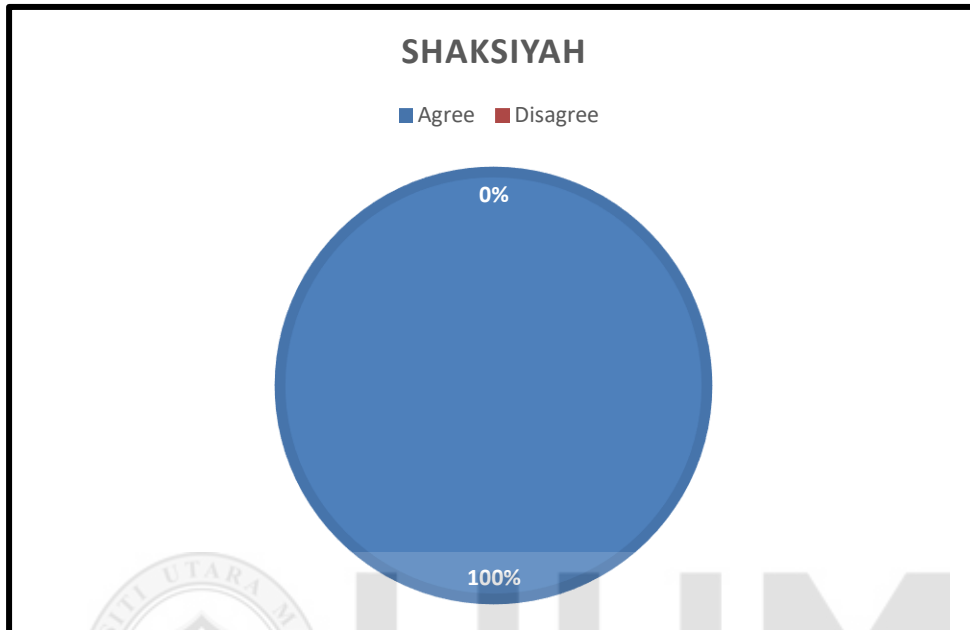


Figure 6.22: *Shaksiyah*

Self- Discipline

The school's rules and regulations also have their own method of assessment called the 'merit' system, which evaluates the students' work, achievements, attendance, punctuality, behaviour, positive contributions to school life and success in developing an Islamic personality by being charitable, humble, and contributing to the community. Certificates of merit and achievement are awarded during 'good work' assemblies and at end of year presentation evenings. Pupils are awarded a bronze certificate for twenty-five merits, silver for fifty and gold for seventy-five. One of the students argued that:

The school merit system has encouraged us to be a good, active and disciplined student. We are aware of the 'dos' and 'don'ts', otherwise our merit will be deducted. Then, this merit system has

gradually shaped our shaksiyah. We get used to it. Alhamdulillah...
(Saikah).

Majority of the students agree that, the school's regulations have really taught them to be a disciplined student. As stated by Amna during the interview:

Apart from learning about Islam, the school is also teaching me about self- discipline. So, the people out there can see that students from Muslim schools are good. We are ambassadors of Islam.

The below pie chart shows that all of 30 respondents agreed that the school's rules and regulations can develop discipline to the students.

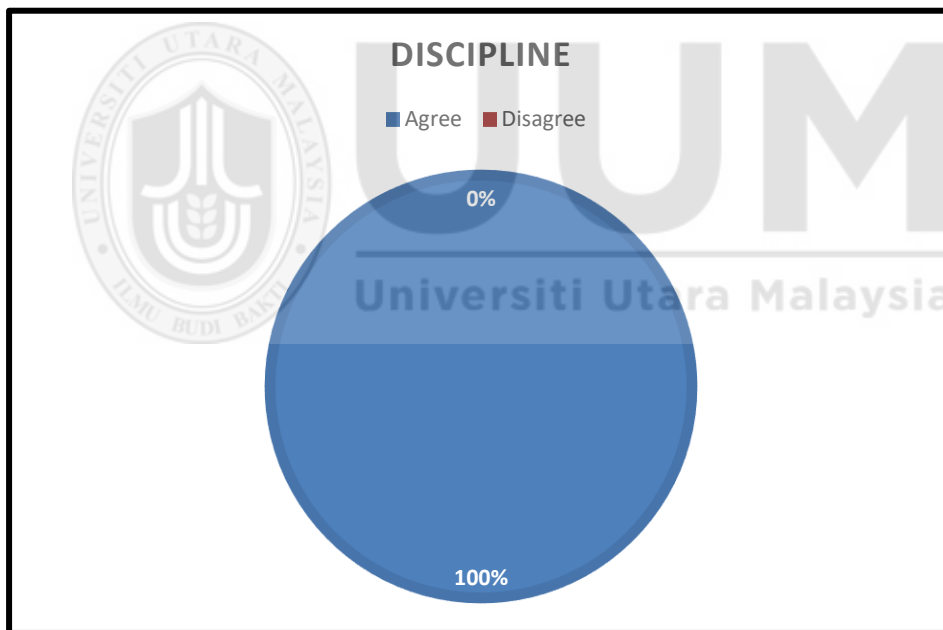


Figure 6.23: Discipline

Academic Excellence

Surprisingly, majority of the students disagreed that the school's regulations can help students to be excellent in academic performance. Izni and Suher commented during the focus groups as below:

Lisa:

I disagree that the rules and regulations can help in academic excellence. The most important aspect in implementing the rule is to develop self-discipline and shaksiyah Islamiyyah to the students. I think the rules and regulations of the school have nothing to do with one's academic excellence. However, for a student who is clever, disciplined and has good Islamic identity, it is a bonus for her. I am very sure that those qualities (academic excellence, discipline and shaksiyah) are everybody's target.

Khadeja:

The role of the rules is to make students more disciplined and to develop Muslim identity to the students. Basically, the existence of the regulations at schools is to regulate schools; to protect students; to enforce rights and to solve conflicts. In fact, the rules and regulations at school can prevent students from behaving in a manner that negatively affects the other students and also to preserve the school's reputation.

On the other hand, about 12 of the students agree that the school's regulation affected one's academic excellence. As stated by Naheed:

In my opinion, the rules and regulations can help students to be successful in academic achievement. In order to be successful, we need to be disciplined. Hence, this is what the school's regulations are all about.

The below pie chart shows that 18 out of 30 respondents disagreed that the school's rules and regulations can help students to be excellent in academic.

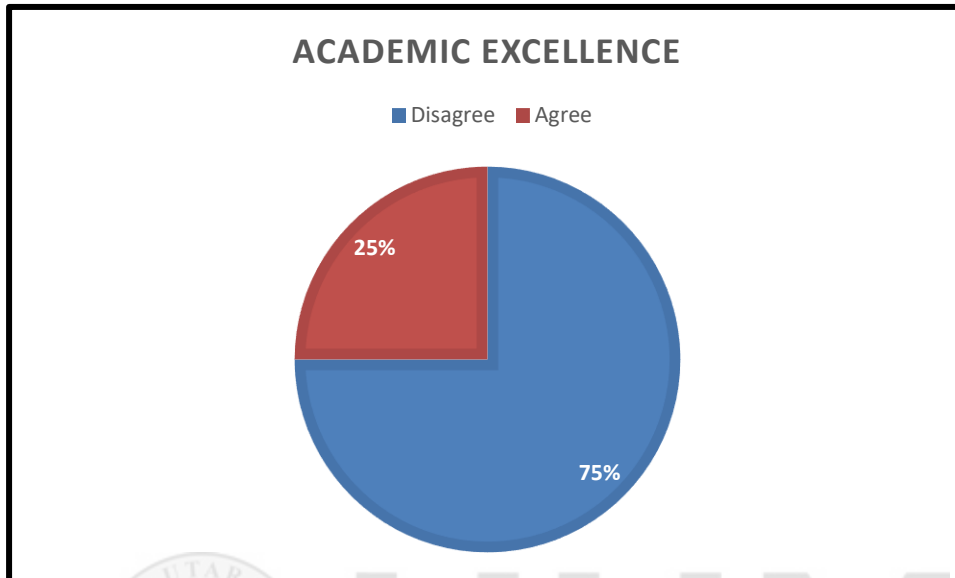


Figure 6.24: Academic Excellence

Tolerance and Respect

Majority of the students agreed that the rules and regulations of the school are also emphasizing on respect and tolerance. Being a respectful and tolerance person is very important especially when the person staying in a multicultural community like the NHCS. Thus, in the rules and regulations, NHCS also emphasizes on being tolerant and respectful to others. As stated on the school's website:

Our aim is to create a happy and caring environment in which pupils are able to develop intellectually, spiritually, socially and emotionally. Pupils are taught to develop tolerance, to be understanding, to have interfaith etiquette, a sense of responsibility and respect towards people of all races, religions, and cultures. This is an integral part of the ethos of the school. (www.nhcs.co.uk. Retrieved on 22nd February 2014)

Moreover, the sense of tolerance and being a respectful person is also important especially when the students live in a non- Muslim country. The head teacher said that:

We need to teach them about respecting people and be tolerant as we are international in terms of enrollment. We have students from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Somalia, Afghanistan and Arab countries. We must respect the differences and after all we are sisters in Islam. They are living in two completely different systems, cultures and values. Therefore it is challenging to develop consistency outside and inside the home. In providing the consistency and negotiation, I think parents and Muslim institutions like NHCS should play a vital role.

A teacher, Nuha argued that:

Who says that if you live in Britain you will turn into a Christian? Please, don't blame other religions. What is the most important is the individual himself. How she/he prepares himself to stay here. How she/ he understands the Quran? So, I think it is the responsibility of Muslim parents and institution like NHCS to provide Islamic knowledge to the children.

Most of the students claimed that the respect and tolerance elements are important so that they know how to engage with the wider society. As numbers of students claimed that:

Lubna:

I learn how to respect other people such my white-British friends, my neighbours. We can't ask for more. This is a non-Muslim country. We cannot force them to understand Islam.. What we need to do is just understand them, respect and show to them that we are good. . The school provides us knowledge to be able to go out into

a non-Muslim society such as respect to each other, sense of tolerance and interfaith etiquette and understanding.

Ilham added that:

There are a lot of people from different backgrounds, skin colour and nationalities. I am happy to be here. Eventhough we have different background, yet we are still together. We have been teaching about respecting each other, embrace the differeces and get to know each other. Nobody would stare at me, because everybody is different. The only similarity we have is aqidah (faith to Islam). Alhamdulillah, we respect each other.

The below pie chart shows that 27 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's rules and regulations can develop the value of tolerance and respect to the students.

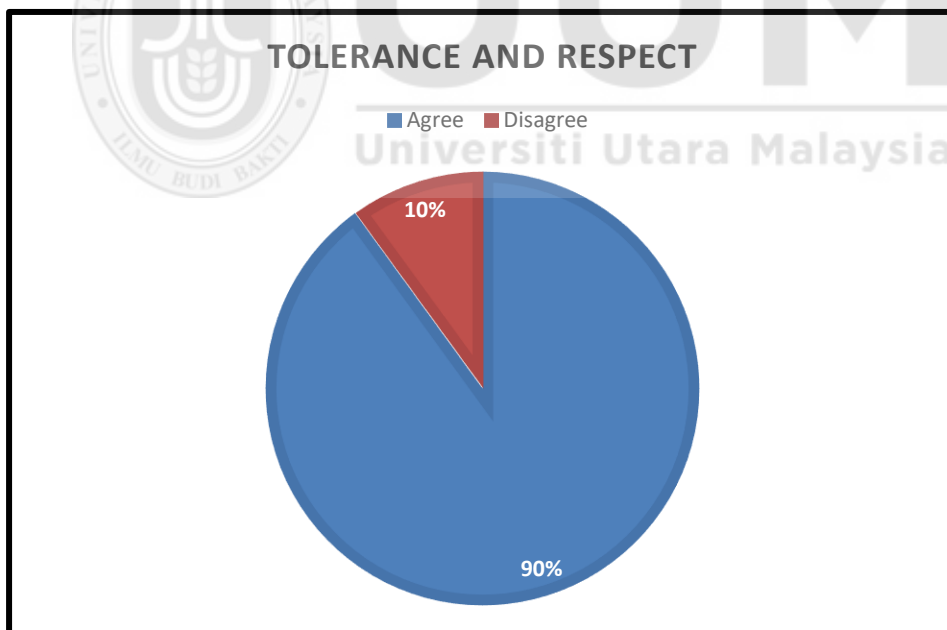


Figure 6.25: Tolerance and Respect

6.3.1.2.2 School's Co-curricular and Islamic Activities.

The school's activities were planned by the board of school's governor and implemented by the school teachers. At NHCS this plan is called as *taqwim*. The school's *taqwim* comprises the curriculum and co-curricular activities. The co-curricular activities include clubs, sports, uniforms club and so on. Furthermore, the activities also include Mentor Mentee, Islamic talks and Islamic circle and morning session.

6.3.1.2.2.1 Data from Participant Observation in a Study Circle Activity

Almas and Nour, students at NHCS, educated young British Muslims, have developed a new set of social and intellectual skills, and they often work with Muslim organisations in Britain, such as Islamic Relief, the Muslim Scout Group, the Islamic Society of Britain, and others. This indicates a growing awareness of the need to forge connections between ordinary British Muslim youth and Muslim organisations. As I noted earlier, the development and needs of Muslims in Leeds is the responsibility of local Muslim communities and organisations. Thus, the collaboration between Muslim communities and organisations is necessary to ensure that the needs of Muslims here are fulfilled. Almas and Nour's interactions with these Muslim organisations led them to pass on the knowledge and skills learned from these organisations to the girls. As Almas says:

I [am] involved in some Muslim organisations so that I am alert about what is happening around Muslims in this country. What are the needs of Muslims, what issues are going on? I also have the opportunity to meet Muslim people across the UK. The experience I gain from these organisations I will share with the girls.

Even though Almas is still a student, she is able to talk in depth on topics including religion, science, geography, physics, chemistry, language and society. Through sitting in at the circle, I have been impressed by her knowledge and determination in leading the circle. Interestingly, some of the circle members are slightly older than her, but she does not consider age to be a barrier to sharing the knowledge.

When asked about her motivation for conducting this circle, Almas said:

Leading the circle is initially as a result of noticing a need in the community. We did this activity for students a few years ago and after seeing such a successful turnout we decided to continue and make it more regular, as the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) says 'the most beloved actions to Allah are those continuous even if they are little'. My main motivation was to give something back to my friends for the sake of Allah. It was also partly a personal development tool that develops your own skills when teaching and it makes you more mature.

The circle is conducted in an informal and relaxed way, with everyone free to give their opinion. The circle provides a conducive, relaxed and easy-going atmosphere, enabling the circle members to feel comfortable and relaxed instead of feeling like they are at a formal event. One attendee, Fatima commented:

I love this circle because we have discussed a lot of stuff about Islam, such as faith, the main articles of Islam, aqidah, fiqh and so on. We have discussed things in an informal and relaxing way after we sit in the classroom. [...] So, it is more friendly and comfortable.

Furthermore, this atmosphere has encouraged the girls to establish a good rapport among themselves. Every summer, they go camping together and organize a picnic in Hyde Park with the intention of strengthening their relationships. This picnic also

provides an opportunity for the girls to learn about cultural differences between them, as everybody brings different food to share. Occasionally, they will collaborate with the local mosque for talks or discussions on matters related to pressing political issues and conflicts in Muslim countries such as Palestine, Libya and Egypt.

Within the circle, the content of discussions is diverse, including things such as the *Quran* and Science, *aqidah*, the issue of Muslims living in a non-Muslim country and the role and responsibility of Muslims to the non-Muslims. Some of the discussion reflected the women's lives – for example the issue of *hijab* and *aurah* in British society and at school specifically, the *muamalah* between genders and the future of British Muslim women. Other discussions focussed on current Muslim issues discussed on television and social media.

The teaching during the circle moves past the simple rote-learning of the *Quran* to a more progressive form of education in which Almas attempts to teach the girls the meanings of verses from the *Quran* and discusses issues with reference to their relevance to contemporary Britain. The themes are chosen and planned well in advance, and are usually recorded in an informal lesson plan. In this context, I would categorise Almas as a *da'iyah*⁵⁸ (a women preacher) under Mahmood's categorisation of it. According to Mahmood, 'a preacher does not necessarily depend on doctrinal expertise *per se*, but also depends on one's moral uprightness and practical knowledge of the tradition' (Mahmood, 2005). This is relevant to Almas, who has had little formal training in doctrinal issues.

⁵⁸ *Da'iyah* means a preacher that practices what she preaches, and her exhortations must be in accord with the *Quran* and the *Sunnah*, undertaken with wisdom and sincerity of the heart and performed for the purpose of pleasing God rather than for personal gain or popularity.

Almas has certain priorities in terms of Islamic education for this circle, such as building a good faith foundation upon which attendees can draw in the future; empowering them to be better ambassadors for their faith through their own choices; providing them with the tools to feel confident about the choices they take; giving them the chance to ask questions and receive guidance; and providing a good social environment where they can meet like-minded people. From my observation, I have seen how she blends all these priorities during the circle's meetings, and transmits them to the girls attractively. One respondent, Hafsa commented:

This circle takes a new perspective on Islamic education. It's not just drilling of the Quran. Quranic Arabic and spoken English are two completely different things, so, I genuinely don't understand what I am reading. In this circle, our interpretation of the Quran could help me know what I am doing and put the context into our lives today.

This circle aims to bring back the younger generation's faith and pride in being a Muslim using an arena that involves challenging and pushing them to think rather than making prescriptions about what they should eat and drink, how they should dress, how they should socialize, and what they should learn. Indeed, they need 'an enhanced awareness of religion to develop their socio-religious identity, which requires facilitating them in accessing the teachings of the *Quran* and *Sunnah*' (Haw, 1998: 152). This circle has indirectly encouraged the attendees to express their religious convictions without fear. They have a positive example in having a young confident girl like Almas as their leader, and by the time they leave the circle they are better judges of right and wrong, not only on a superficial level, but also through a deeper appreciation of life and its aims. The extension of knowledge makes them aware, and makes them appreciate the existence of Allah (Rizvi, 2007).

Throughout the observation and interview process, I saw that although the girls had a focal point that brought them together – their intention to be a better *muslimah* (Muslim woman) – has encouraged an awareness of the importance of improving their knowledge. The reward⁵⁹ of seeking knowledge is one of the factors that motivate them to come to this circle.

One student, Hajar commented:

Alhamdulillah, we have Almas. Even though she is younger than me, I do not feel shame to learn from her. She is very good. We are like one big family. We learn, and we make friends.

Almas's motivation to lead this circle stems from her belief in the importance of women acquiring Islamic knowledge to use in bringing up their families. She reflects:

I started to lead this circle when I started thinking about the future of Muslim generations. Mothers play an important role in family, so we need knowledgeable mothers in Muslim families.

According to Almas, the girls' study circle emerged in response to the perception that Islamic education is a necessary means for organizing daily life, and that it is an obligation for every Muslim to learn such knowledge.

⁵⁹ As a *Hadith* of Abu Darda says:

If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of paradise. The angels will lower their wings in their great pleasure with one who seeks knowledge, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth and the fish in the deep water will ask forgiveness for the learned man (Abu Dawud 25/3634).

From the girls' perspective, the existence of the girls' circle helps them to understand Islam theoretically and practically. Hafsa, a student, explained:

This circle is very useful. I think I more understand what Islam is and am more aware about Islam. Islam is not about praying, fasting, wearing the hijab and so on, but a way of life. [It is about] how we translate our understanding into practice and [make it] relevant to the organization of everyday life.

6.3.1.2.2.2 Data from the Interviews and a Focus Group

From the interview sessions with the students, I have pointed out that majority of the students agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities give four (4) impacts to their identity. These co-curricular and Islamic activities have promoted them to have good *shaksiyah*; be active and brave; be knowledgeable and help them build leadership skills. I will discuss each in the following paragraphs.

Shaksiyah

Developing good *shaksiyah Islamiyah* is a priority objective of the co-curricular and Islamic activities. There are various activities that promote good *shaksiyah* to the students, such as Mentor Mentee, Islamic talks and study circle and morning session.

During the interviews, the students said as below:

Khadeja:

*Apart from learning Islam, we have been taught about relationships [...] with mankind and [...] Allah. We understand that if we have a good relationship to Allah, inshaAllah we also will have a good relationship to mankind. This is the basic understanding of Islam, *hablun min Allah* and *hablun min Al-nas* (the relationship to Allah and the relationship to mankind). So, we have been practising in this circle, we learn and we make friends!*

Noura:

By involving in the school's activities, it helps me behave accordingly. Instilling good akhlak, shaksiyah Islamiyah and practise it! I saw Muslim teenagers did nothing on the streets, and committing a lot of vandalism. These are serious problems. So, we need to have a new nation of Muslim teenagers. Being a Muslim is not being a failure!

The below pie chart shows that all of the respondents agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities can develop *shaksiyah* to the students.

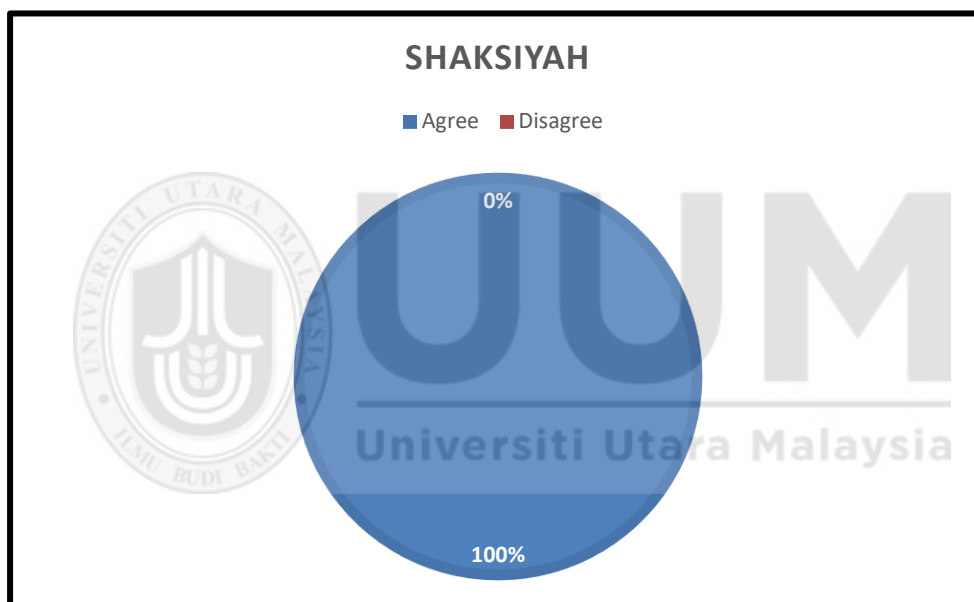


Figure 6.26: *Shaksiyah*

Active and Brave

Majority of the students agreed that all the co-curricular activities and Islamic activities have encouraged them to be active and brave. The activities such as study circle and mentor- mentee were seen as mediums of exploring self-potential, developing self-confident and independence which led them to be active and brave.

As commented by a student, Rashda:

The school's activities give us chances to show our skills and potentials. We can socialize with other students and increase our self- esteem. All of these elements can make us become brave and excited to participate in the school's activities that are offered.

Raifa said that:

Many non- Muslims view that Muslim women cannot go outside, are depressed, busy with domestic role and passive. But, at this school we have been teaching about the successful women during our Prophet Muhammad S.A.W period. So, the school activities also encourage us to be brave and active.

The below pie chart shows that 27 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities encouraged students to be active and brave.

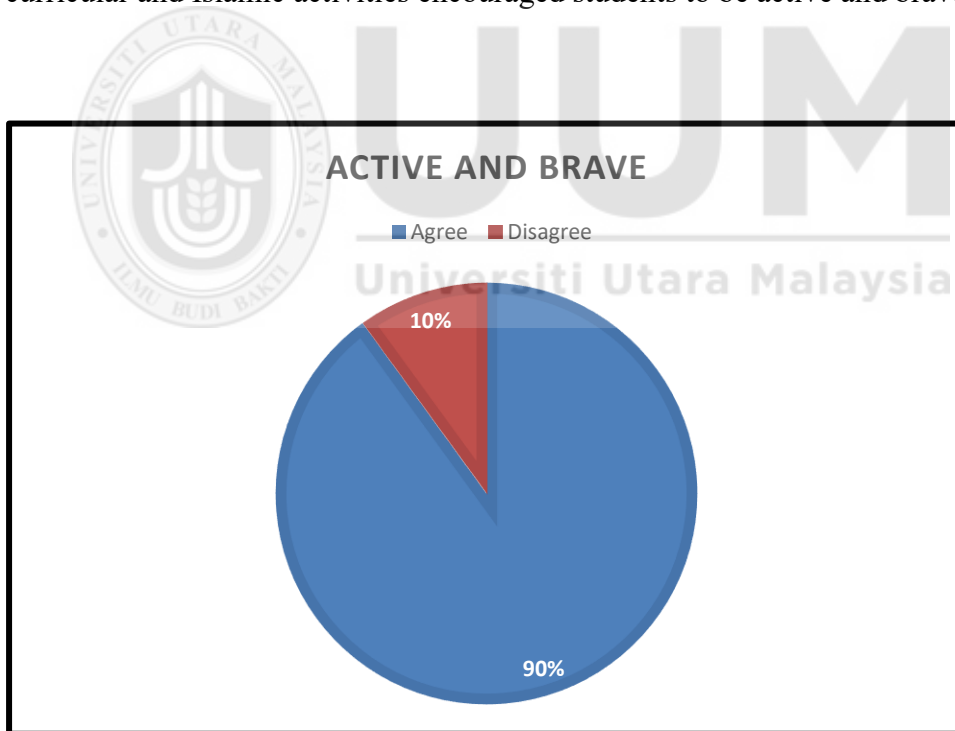


Figure 6.27: Active and Brave

Knowledgeable

The school's activities provide them places to gain knowledge. This is agreed by majority of the students. Among them are Noura, Raifa and Salma. Their responses are as follows:

Noura:

Here, probably everyone is able to talk about the theory of evolution of Darwin. We learned about it and we had a debate so we are not biased about it. We understand the theory of Darwin and we understand the Islamic findings as well, so we are able to have a good healthy debate. So, when we are outside of an Islamic school when we are talking with non-Muslims we are knowledgeable enough, we are strong Muslims and at the same time we are confident in talking to other people as well. It provides us the tools.

Raifa:

We also have assemblies for a special day based on Islamic calendar which provide us with a lot of Islamic information. We have speakers and inspirational scholars coming in to motivate students to be engaged in the society and make them interested in Islam. We also have students going out to the community, showing that Muslims are not about segregation, and Muslims are out there in the community and they are good people.

Salma:

NHCS has provided a lot of activities that can increase our knowledge about Islam. Apart from the classroom, the knowledge that we gain from these activities are also beneficial. Here, it is more practical. It is important for me especially when I am not good enough myself in Islamic knowledge. What I found in these

activities [is that] it not only teaches about Islam but also trains [the student] to be a better Muslim.

On the other hand, there were about 13 students who did not agree that the school's co- curricular and Islamic activities encouraged them to be knowledgeable students.

As stated a student, Noura:

I think I got a lot of knowledge in the classroom. We have RE subjects. The school's co- curricular and Islamic activities only encourage us to be brave, teach us about communication skills and so on. It is not so much on gaining knowledge.

The pie chart below shows that 17 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities helped them to be a knowledgeable student.

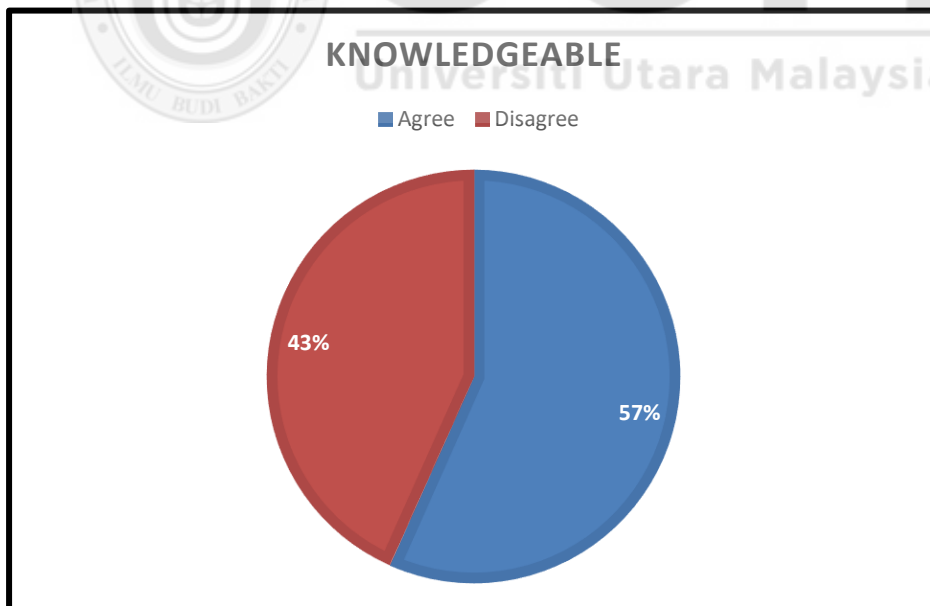


Figure 6.28: Knowledgeable

Build Leadership Skills

During the school hours, the students learn Islamic education based on syllabus designed by the school. Hence, during the co-curricular and Islamic activities, the school has taken this chance to build leadership skills to the students. These leadership skills are important for every student as a preparation to be a leader in the future as well as give contribution to the Muslims and wider society. As commented by the students, Lana and Haley:

Lana:

In the school's activities, we learn that everybody is a da'ie (one who is responsible to propagate and to convey the message of Allah), khalifatullah (vicegerent of Allah). If I do not take this responsibility, Allah will ask me in the hereafter.

Haley:

The teachers encourage us to be brave. For example, during the co-curricular activities, the teachers asked students to be in group, and every group should have a leader. The leader will be changed every week. So, everybody has a chance to be a leader. The teachers will observe us to see how the leader manages the group. Consequently, we become brave and independent. I personally am very shy in the classroom. But, during these school activities, it looks like I am wearing another cap.

The above pie chart shows that 21 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities can build leadership skills to the students.

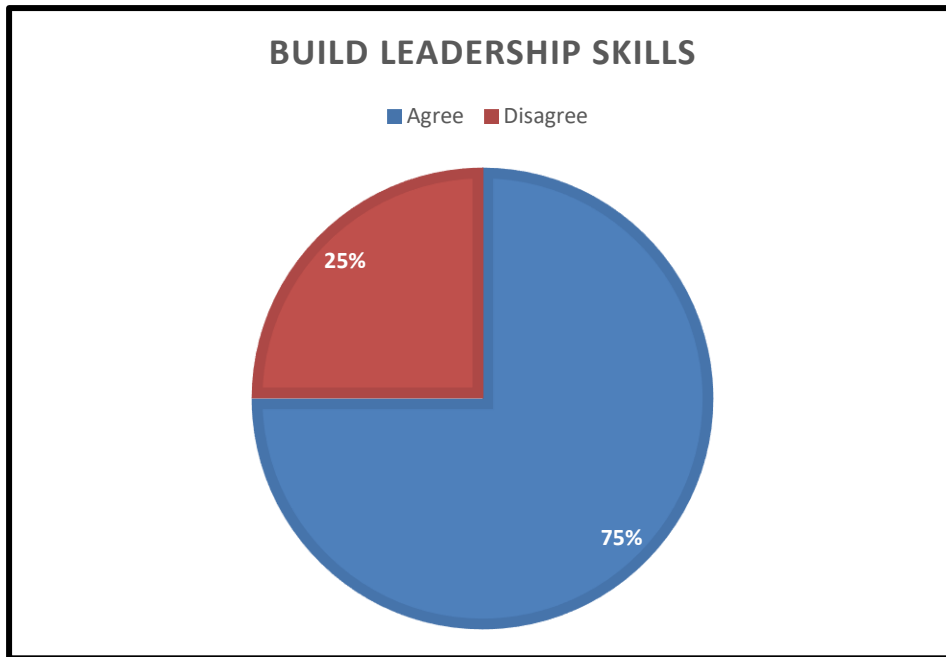


Figure 6.29: Build Leadership Skills

6.3.1.2.3 School's Culture

For the school's culture, I have divided this component into two (2) categories. They are reading culture and preservation of school's reputation. Indeed, the reading culture and school's reputation are among the main elements to maintain and preserve the school's culture. Below is the evidence.

Reading culture

Throughout the fieldwork, I found that the reading culture in this school is moderate.

During the interviews, numbers of students claimed that:

Noura:

I am not really into reading. It is because we don't have enough Islamic books in the school library. The library is small, and the books are limited to certain subject areas

such as Geography, Sciences and fiction books. We do have Islamic books, but it is just a few and quite old.

Lisa: *I think we have numerous ways in order to be good in shaksiyah and identity. I prefer attending and listening to Islamic classes or talks to reading.*

Haley: *I admit that reading is a bridge to knowledge. But, nowadays, we have various ways to get knowledge and to be good. I prefer to use social media such as internet or listening to the Islamic talks. I also attend the mosque activities such as study circles, sirah classes, tafsir classes. Leeds Grand Mosque (LGM) for example, is a very active mosque.*

The below pie chart shows that only 14 out of 30 respondents agreed that the reading culture can help them to have the Muslim identity.

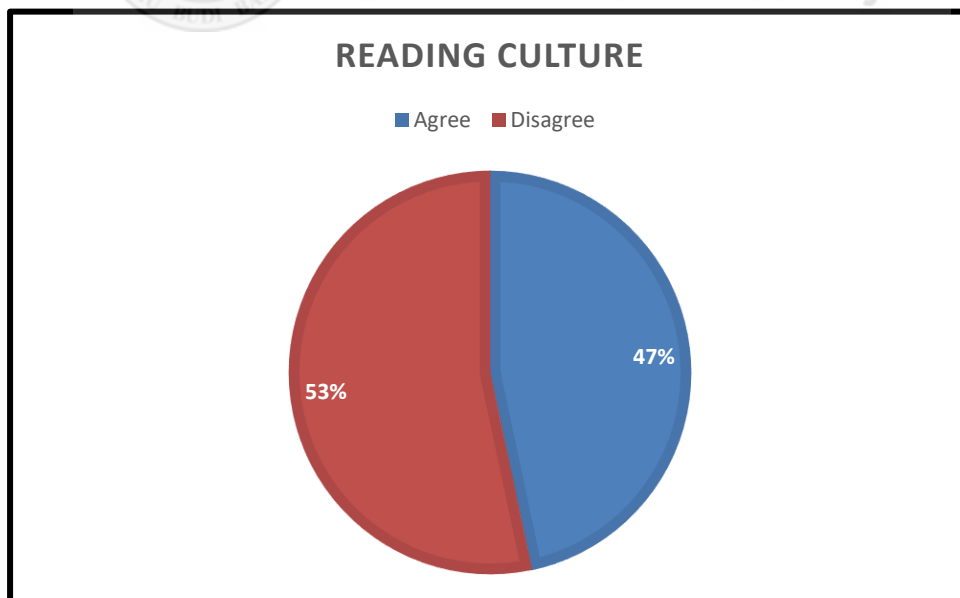


Figure 6.30: Reading Culture

To Preserve School's Reputation

New Horizon has been inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)⁶⁰. The latest inspection in 2007 gave generally positive feedback:

The quality of education is good and the school meets all but one detail in one of the regulations. The school has improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. It meets its aim of providing 'an Islamic education that is relevant to the modern world'. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is good. The girls show exemplary attitudes to learning. The curriculum is good and the teaching is satisfactory. As a result, the girls make satisfactory progress and they reach broadly average standards (OFSTED, New Horizon Community School, 17-18 January 2007).

Moreover, the school has also been inspected by Bridge School Inspectorate (BSI)⁶¹. This inspection was carried out under section 162 (A) of the Education Act 2002, as amended to check whether the school continues to meet the requirements for registration, and to determine whether the school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of its association. The recent inspection at NHCS was undertaken between 25-28 January 2010. The evaluation of the school was as follows:

⁶⁰ OFSTED is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It reports directly to parliament, and 'inspects and regulates services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages. The aim of all this work is to promote improvement and value for money in the services they inspect and regulate, so that children and young people, parents and carers, adult learners and employers benefit'. (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/about-us>). (Retrieved on 3rd June 2014).

⁶¹ 'The Bridge Schools Inspectorate has approval from the Secretary of State for Education in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and began its work in September 2008 to inspect schools belonging to the Christian Schools' Trust (SCT) and the Association of Muslim Schools (AMSUK) throughout England. BSI provides an opportunity for cooperation between faith groups to establish a specialist faith schools inspectorate which respects their distinctive ethos'. See <http://www.bridgeschoolsinspectorate.co.uk/home>. (Retrieved on 3rd June 2014).

The school successfully achieves its aim as a result of determined leadership from the head teacher together with care and guidance from the staff. It succeeds in broadening pupils' horizons within a balanced curriculum and an excellent range of enrichment activities. Girls are well cared for. The school ensures their safety and encourages them to develop spiritually and morally. The school's strong Islamic ethos ensures that pupils put faith into practice and so develop their spiritual awareness and their moral compass (Bridge Schools Inspectorate on 25-28 January 2010).

The school does not select pupils on entry by academic ability or specific examination to prevent it from catering specifically for the demands of longstanding British Muslims, and thus to remain open to pupils who have recently moved to England, whose parents do not want them to go to a mixed school and feel that it would be better for them to go to a Muslim school. The head teacher insists that:

We don't have a set of examinations but we do have minimum criteria. The main thing is we have got the EAL coordinator in the school now – EAL is English as an Additional Language – so that teacher can support those students. Especially if they move from a Muslim country, it's nicer to have that environment as well. So that's the reason why we haven't got a set examination as other private schools because we try to cater [for] everybody by having the EAL on board (Head Teacher).

As part of the CRB, safe environment policy and neighbourhood policy, NHCS seem to have become reasonably well accepted by the wider community, and has changed its name from Leeds Islamia Girls' School to New Horizon Community School to promote a more inclusive perception and acceptance. This name is seen as friendly to the wider society. As one teacher commented:

*The community generally [has] not had any issues [with us] since I have been here. Probably, mostly after 9/11 and 7/7, the school changed its name. It used to be Leeds Islamia Girls School. It changes its name to NHCS to rebrand, to make people realise that it is an inclusive school. The reason being to avoid the negativity of the media and people's perception of the school*⁶² (Nuha)

Majority of the students claimed that the school's reputation has given impact to their identity. This is due to students' awareness about the questions of what does this school stand for? What are the perception and expectation of the outsiders towards the NHCS specifically and Islam generally? What are the contributions of students in order to preserve and maintain the school's reputation? These questions have triggered students to have Islamic identity as a preservation of the school's reputation.

As claimed by number of students:

Ilham:

We have to prove to people out there that Islamic schools are not segregated. We must show that Muslims who are out there in the community are good people. At school we learn about being tolerant and how to put Islam into context, and how to engage with the host society without losing our Islamic identity.

Jannah:

I have to be good in akhlak so that other people will say that Muslim schools are good. It is about the reputation of Islam and Muslim in this country because the British government and non-

⁶² This is not an unusual strategy, e.g. Markfield Institute of Higher Education at the Islamic Foundation in Leicestershire.

Muslim people have always put very close eyes to Islamic schools and Muslim people.

The pie chart below shows that only 13 out of 30 respondents agreed that the school's reputation has influenced their identity.

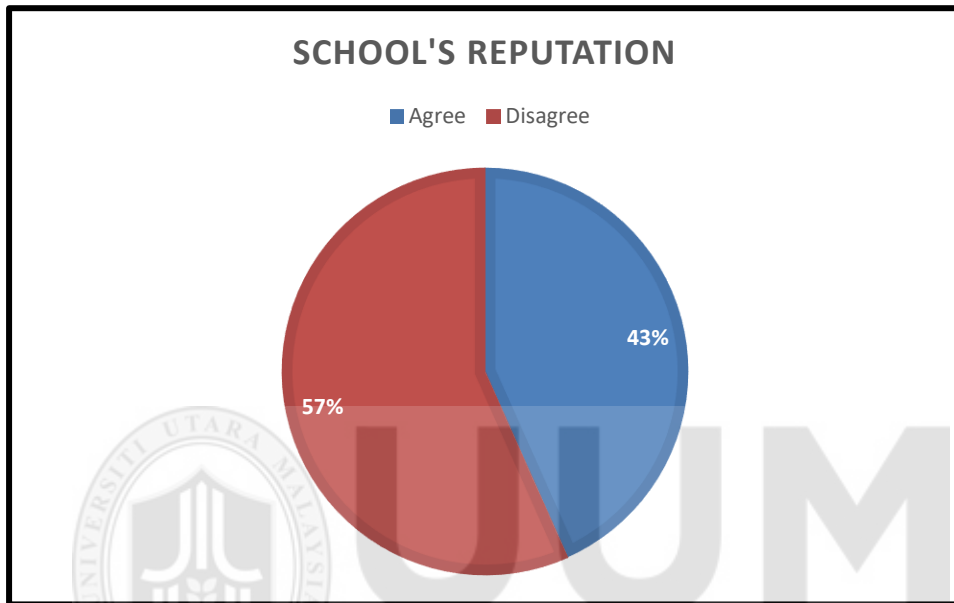


Figure 6.31: School's Reputation

6.3.1.2.4 Environment and Facilities

The below pie chart shows that all of 30 respondents agreed that the school's environment and facilities have affected their Islamic identity.

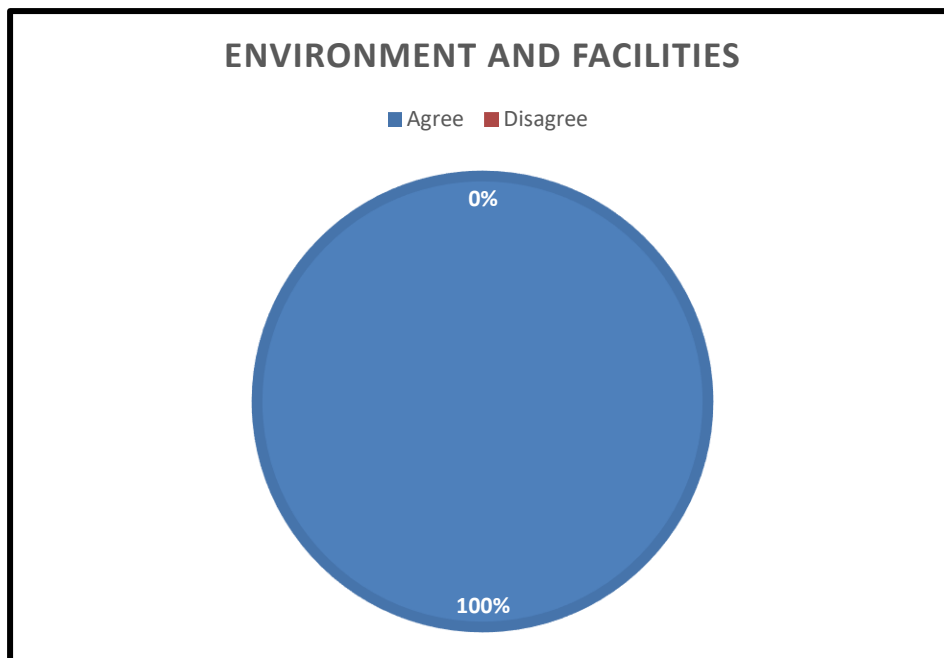


Figure 6.32: Environment and Facilities

Most of the students agreed that the ethos and environment at this school have affected their behaviour to be a good student. The environment at this school includes the *biah* such as no *ikhtilat* between boys and girls, school’s decoration and facilities. Each of these factors will be presented below.

No *Ikhtilat*

Most of the students agreed that the prohibition of mixing between boys and girls (*ikhtilat*) is the most dominant factor that can avoid them from committing social problem. During an interview, a student Lubna, pointed out that:

In the past few years, my parents have thought about moving out. We’ve been to Saudi Arabia a few times. It is difficult, especially for me, who was in the state school before because they are free to mix with different sexes. I am very worried about that.

One student, Lisa, asserted:

The environment here is much better than in a state school. I think the girls are very lucky to be here because this is a Muslim girls' school and we learn within an Islamic environment. By attending a single-sex school, it can preserve my Islamic identity. This is a non-Muslim country. A lot of horrible things happened and a lot of things contradict to Islam such as drink alcohol, free sex, drugs and so on.

Many of the students reported that they feel happy in the school because it is Islamic, it has good teachers as a role model and that they feel 'comfortable' because they all wear scarves and share a common religious and cultural background⁶³. Tania, a Pakistani student, commented:

I really like this school because although it is not government funded it has everything a normal state school has. Most importantly, this is an Islamic school. I learn national curriculum alongside the Islamic curriculum. As this is an all girls' school, I have a lot of fun and get on with most of the girls.

Decorations

The NHCS reflects its Islamic character through its decorations and environment, such as *Quranic* verses, *hadiths*, poems and proverbs and Islamic calligraphy on the school walls and classrooms, and boards full with Islamic displays. In the hall, for instance, there was information about Muslims in Britain, and articles about Islam and faith.

⁶³ According to Halstead, (2005) differences in terms of religion, culture, background may affect the educational achievement of the students especially for Muslim children at state school. This is due to some children experience discrimination and Islamophobia.

The students also agreed that the Islamic ethos and environment of this school was built because of the decorations factor. As Lana commented:

The decoration in this school has made it different from the other state schools. We can see a lot of information about Islam. This decoration has burst our Islamic spirit in which indirectly have impacted our identity.

Noura also added that:

The school's decoration has made us aware and realized that this is an Islamic school. We have to uphold the good name of Islamic schools. One of the ways is by practising good Islamic shaksiyah and identity

Musolla

Like other Islamic schools, NHCS allows students to perform *Salah* (prayers) that fall within the school hours congregationally in the *musolla*. The facilities, especially the *musolla*, were seen as a centre of developing Muslim identity to the students. The role of *musolla* is not for prayer purposes per se, but as a place for Islamic activities like Islamic talks, *usrah*, *kitab*s session and as a place for group discussion.

Like Meera said that:

The role of musolla is very important. Musolla only exists at Muslim school. We can't find musolla at state schools. This is such a privilege for Islamic school students. Apart from performing solah, there are various Islamic activities and programs inside there which can help students to be good and preserve the Islamic identity.

6.3.2 The Religious Education Subjects (RE)

The NHCS provides Islamic curriculum together with the national curriculum. The Islamic curriculum comprises Islamic studies, Arabic and *Quranic* studies. The Islamic curriculum and Islamic ethos and environment have distinguished this school from mainstream schools in Leeds. It is believed that the RE subjects can help in the shaping of students' identity at school.

6.3.2.1 Data from the Observation

Throughout the observation at this school, every day begins with morning tutor time, where the pupils start the day by listening to the glorious *Quran*, offering praise to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), making references to *Hadith* and how Muslims can all work to improve life by following the beautiful *sunnah* (Prophet Muhammad actions). Meanwhile, the observation in year 11 class for Islamic studies and *Quranic* studies, witnessed that the students have to recite *du'a* (prayers) before and after lessons. The students were well behaved and gave the teacher their full attention. When the teacher says Prophet Muhammad *Sallallahu alaihi wassalam* (Peace be upon him), all the students will automatically and congregationally answer '*sallallahu alaihi wassalam*' without any command from the teacher. This response appears to have become a norm rather than something that they do because the teacher expects it of them. At the age of 16 years old, their maturity and knowledge about Islam is well presented through their behaviour as they understand and articulate Islam, rich with ethics and manners. During interviews, students answered the questions politely, frequently saying *assalamualaikum* (peace be upon you) during the first meeting, *bismillah* (in the name of Allah) before answering the first question of the interview, *jazakillah* (thank you) and *salaam* after finishing the interview. They also frequently used *Alhamdulillah* and

mashaAllah when they expressed feelings during the interviews. The level of their politeness and respect for me was probably increased more than usual because I was an outsider at this school.

Similarly, the teachers have created an Islamic atmosphere in the classroom by trying to integrate the values of Islam in the topics being discussed. For example, in a Year 11 class I observed, the teacher played *nasheed* songs that were related to the themes of the day, as well as a song from Yusuf Islam's album⁶⁴ 'Your Mother' on Mother's Day, which in the UK is typically a secular celebration. In many lessons, the teachers made links with Islamic values.

The New Horizon Community School fully implements the National Curriculum and adheres very closely to the attainment targets and programmes of study set therein for core and foundation subjects. However, the content of the Islamic curriculum is decided by the teachers themselves. The national curriculum guidelines are followed at Key Stage 4 (KS4) for all GCSE (General Certificate for Secondary Education) subjects, using course syllabi produced and recognized by examination bodies such as Edexcel⁶⁵, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance⁶⁶ (AQA) and Oxford Cambridge RSA examination board⁶⁷ (OCR).

In the Islamic curriculum, the four main strands of *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Aqidah* and *Sirah* are infused into the curriculum. These four subjects represent fundamental knowledge

⁶⁴ From the album 'I look I see', which was released in 2005.

⁶⁵ Edexcel is a multinational education and examination body owned by Pearson. Pearson Edexcel, the only privately owned examination board in the UK.

⁶⁶ AQA compiles specifications and holds examinations in various subjects at GCSE. AQA is a registered charity and independent of the government

⁶⁷ is an examination board that sets examinations and awards qualifications (including GCSEs and A-levels)

that every Muslim is expected to learn. During Key Stage 3 (KS3) (Years 7, 8 and 9), the pupils will follow an extensive programme of study on Islamic beliefs and practices so that they can develop confident Muslim attitudes, personalities and understandings.

There are marked differences between the forms that Islamic education takes at state schools and at NHCS, as the teaching aims are not the same. In state schools, Islam is taught as an individual subject, but at NHCS it is taught as a responsibility to Allah rather than a responsibility to the school. Thus, it aims to develop the understanding of Islam and the application of Islamic principles to everyday life. The deputy head teacher and Islamic Studies teacher, Aisha, stressed this point during an interview:

In state school, Islam is taught as a topic about one religion rather than a practised way of life. We teach Islam as a practical way of life. In mainstream schools, Islam is taught as a topic, with a constraint of time to teach it. We live in a country that has religious freedom, so we have the freedom to practice our religion and we have the right to set up Islamic schools like this one.

In fact, the teaching of Islam in state school did not have good resources, and that although the state provision of teaching in Islam is improving, it is still purely exam-oriented. A teacher said that:

Some of the books I have seen are very good now, [but] some of them [that I saw] when I was at school were not very good, because they didn't have correct information. Nowadays, the books are getting better, but again I think they just taught the topic that will come out in the exam and not about the rest of it. It is a very tiny percentage, very little (Sakinah, 31 years old).

The exam board specifies certain books and recommends others, as well as providing teacher guides for these books. These are key resources for KS 4. For KS 3, there are several resources, one of the most useful being ‘What Islam is All About’. This book is published by Noorart Inc., based in America, and written by an American Muslim – Yahiya Emerick⁶⁸. It is designed for young adult readers, and has a good introduction to Islam, discussing a lot of the key topics, with detailed sections on belief, the spiritual mentality of Muslims, Islam’s history, functions, manners and so on. One teacher observed:

I use it to plan my lesson. This book does not follow the national curriculum but is focused only on Islam. Indeed, this is a very good textbook to explain the key concepts that girls need to learn about (Aisha, Islamic studies teacher, 26 years old).

In addition to fundamental knowledge about Islam, the students are also taught Arabic. As the *Quran* is written in Arabic and Islam is revealed by Allah through the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Arabic, the language is equally important to the texts in understanding Islam. As the Arabic studies teacher argued:

When somebody asks you: what is Islam? Islam is al-Quran and al-Hadith. Quran is the words of Allah and hadith is the words of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which came by revelation by Allah through the angel to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). So, both came originally in Arabic. So, if we are talking about keeping the identity of the girls or Muslims – keeping them all the time as Muslims – we must teach them what Allah SWT said (Nuha, Arabic and Quranic teacher, 35 years old).

⁶⁸ ‘He is a former President of the Islamic Foundation of North America, vice-principal at an Islamic school, and a Muslim author. He has written many articles that have been published in local as well as national magazines, both in North America and abroad’. See http://www.noorart.com/figures/yahiya_emerick (Retrieved on 24 April, 2014)

The lessons in Islamic studies, Arabic studies and *Quranic* Studies impact on the pupils' characters and aim to make them better people, better Muslim girls and thus to become better Muslim women. Such teaching aims to have an impact on them as people, rather than to just help them to achieve academic success. However, in NHCS, students hope to be successful worldly and, in the hereafter, as both the school and parents wish them to.

6.3.2.2 Data from the Interviews and a Focus Group

For the interview under the RE section, the questions being raised were about the importance of RE subjects in the shaping of their identity. Throughout the interviews, focus groups and participant observation, this research indicated that majority of the students agreed that teaching and learning the RE subjects at these schools have given rise to two significant contributions in the formation of their identity. First, they make them realized the status, right and role of women in Islam and, second they have improved their attitude and identity as Muslims.

6.3.2.2.1 Realize the Status, Right and Role of Women in Islam

Majority of the students claimed that through the RE subjects, they realized about the Muslim women status and right in Islam as well as the role of Muslim women in spreading Islam. Lily held that:

There is no discrimination about women in Islam. Islam has improved the status of women. In fact, we have a lot of sirah that talk about the importance and the role on women in Islam, for example about Saidatina Khadijah, Aishah, Fatimah, Asma Abu Bakar and others. So, by sitting in this class, it lifted my motivation to be like them inshaallah.

Nada added that:

Many people said that Muslim women are depressed, passive and being marginalised in the society. It is because they do not know the truth of Islam. They cannot differentiate between tradition and Islamic texts. So, by learning these subjects I know that the rights of women are equal to those of men. But of course, those rights are relevant to the women's fitrah and limitation.

The pie chart below shows that all of 30 respondents agreed that the RE subjects made them realize about the status, right and role of Muslim women.

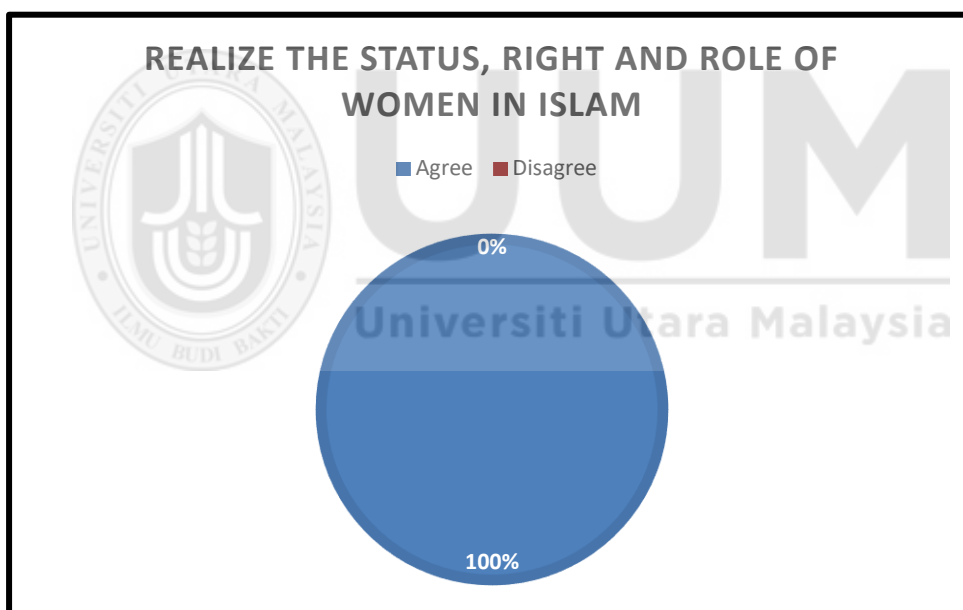


Figure 6.33: Realize the Status, Right and Role of Women in Islam

6.3.2.2.2 Improve their Attitude and Identity

In the Islamic curriculum, the four main strands of *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Aqidah* and *Sirah* are infused into the curriculum. These four subjects represent fundamental knowledge that every Muslim is expected to learn. During KS3 (Years 7, 8 and 9), the pupils will follow an extensive programme of study on Islamic beliefs and practices so that they

can develop confident Muslim attitudes, personalities and understandings. The deputy head teacher, who teaches Islamic studies, gave great importance to these strands, and stated during an interview:

The girls need to know about Islamic worship because it's something that they must put into practice, so we try to be as practical as possible. I think that knowledge they can use straight away [is most important, such as] Fiqh of Ibadah (worship) salah, wudu', and how to perform Hajj. Basic principles [need to be known], such as Aqidah [belief] how to strengthen the iman, belief in angels, belief in books, etc. [They also need to know about] Sirah – the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the history of Islam and the caliphs that came after. It is basic understanding, but with deep understanding of the prophet and his influence on Muslims. [Also] Akhlaq is a big focus and priority for these girls because they are children and can go away with good adab/akhlaq and Islamic knowledge (Aisha, 25 February 2013).

One student commented:

This school is important because it provides a national curriculum within an Islamic environment. Children have an education within all subjects – Science, Maths, English, History, and Geography. It doesn't matter what the subject is, but it needs to be linked to Islam so that we understand that Islam is not just about praying five times a day, [and] it's not just about tahajjud [night prayer] and fasting. We need to have the knowledge for ourselves so that we are better people and we can practice our Deen (religion) (Rashda).

When I raised the issue about the role of the school in terms of implementing Islamic education, the Deputy Head Teacher asserted that an inadequate Islamic education could be detrimental to this generation of children, and that is the most worrying issue to address at NHCS:

As far as I am concerned, it does not matter how successful the person is, if they are not successful in their deen, then they are not successful in this world. I think it's obviously detrimental if they can live in an Islamic school without understanding Islam – detrimental to them, their future, their families and their children. It's really sad if they do not understand Islam properly.

Sakinah, RE teacher, was concerned about the impact on children's behaviour when they do not get adequate Islamic education:

They can easily be influenced if they don't have a proper Islamic education. For example, I know Muslims who are not being educated in the Islamic education system – the family does not understand their deen, [and] they get involved in un-Islamic things. But they think it's okay [and that] there is no harm in it – because they don't know what halal and haram are and can't see the harm.

She also claimed that

Many parents came to me and said that their daughters have great improvement in behaviour and attitude towards parents and the other family members. This would mean that she could take all of herself (with good manners) to school and bring it all of herself at home.

However, apart from shaping the identity, they were also concerned about the attack from 'within' Islam in the form of Islamic extremism, and that they wanted 'moderate' Islamic education as a defence against what they perceived as immorality:

I am worried about the future of our children. There are a lot of horrible things happening. Some people go towards extremism. So, I want to show the children the middle way ... Balance means not too extreme and not too far away from our religion (Nuha).

Aisha, a teacher, held that:

Islamic education is very important, especially living in England. We are surrounded by an unhealthy environment. So, it is important for institutions, and classes to teach about Islam. Alhamdulillah, a lot are going on to get people to know what the deen (Islam) is and to not move people far away from their deen. It is very difficult for children out there.

She also added that:

It is important that they are educated about their religion because it is a huge part of their identity, which they are now old enough to consciously take the decision to follow. In addition, research has shown that those Muslims who are more educated about Islam are less likely to fall into violent extremism.

The school's governor claimed that:

Lessons to be learned by pupils (such as aqidah, sirah and akhlak) impact their character to make them better people, better Muslim girls, and then better Muslim women. It impacts them as people rather than just [providing] academic success. They have success of their character and morals. The importance of Islamic education is obviously, if it is successful, then it would impact their character, which is the hope of teaching in Islamic schools (Dr. Razaq Raj).

Whilst interviewing the students, majority of the students agreed that these RE subjects have shaped their identity in the sense that some topics being discussed are related to their day-to-day lives. The interviews showed that they perceived a large improvement in their behavior attending to this school:

At the beginning, it was very good, it was the first time I met many Muslims friends. Previously I was at a school where there were

hardly any Muslims. [The] first time I saw a lot of girls in hijab, I saw everybody was praying and it helped me. I felt more comfortable to practice Islam. Then, I slowly learnt about Islam (the RE subjects) and changed my behaviour. Alhamdulillah... I hope I can istiqomah... (Shasha, student).

The below pie chart shows that all 30 respondents agreed the RE subjects have improved their attitude and identity.

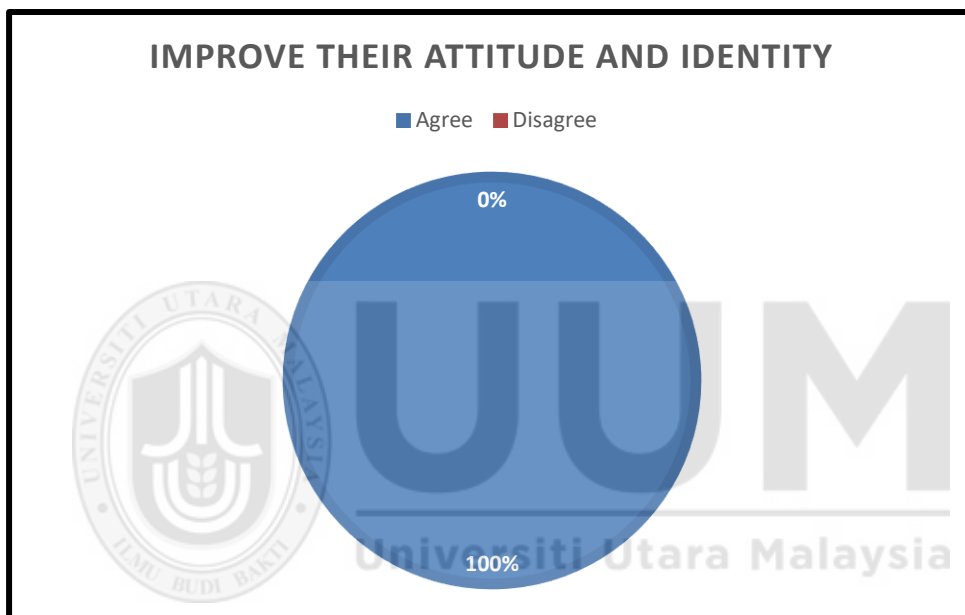


Figure 6.34: Improve their Attitude and Identity

6.3.3 Role Model

NHCS is seen by the staff and the students to provide positive role models, as well as an atmosphere that is free from male dominance and harassment and which emphasizes the feelings of sisterhood between staff, staff and students and students. All the teachers at NHCS are female, aged between 20 and 45, and the majority are married Pakistani women with three being non-Pakistani – an Egyptian, a Bangladeshi and a Black Caribbean woman.

We want to create a warm, friendly, supportive atmosphere. So, all the teachers are female. From this base, the students believe they had the freedom to explore ideas about being a woman, or specifically a Muslim woman (Head Teacher).

Many of the students reported that they feel happy in the school because it is Islamic, good teachers as a role model and that they feel 'comfortable' because they all wear scarves and share a common religious and cultural background⁶⁹.

Hence, under this section, I have divided it into three discussions, first; what are the qualities of these teachers to become a role model, second; what are the impacts of role models to their identity and finally; what are their future contributions to the society after finishing their study?

6.3.3.1 The Qualities of a Teacher to Become a Role Model

Majority of the students agreed that teachers become their role models because of three criteria; *qudwah hasanah*, knowledgeable and charismatic.

6.3.3.1.1 *Qudwah Hasanah*

A teacher, Sakina, 31 years old, views the importance of NHCS to be grounded in its providing Islamic role models for the children as a result of practicing Muslim teachers. It is undeniable that, during their teenage years, children imitate their role models. Whilst it is hard to find good Islamic role models outside NHCS, all the teachers inside it are role models:

⁶⁹ According to Halstead, (2005) differences in terms of religion, culture, background may affect the educational achievement of the students especially for Muslim children at state school. This is due to some children experience discrimination and Islamophobia.

I am happy because girls can talk to the teachers freely here. The students ask them (teachers) questions not about the lesson but maybe about personal life, hijab, Islam and something like that. They talk to the teachers and the teachers respond with an Islamic, good message. They have good role models here, so I am very happy in that aspect (Sakina, 31, teacher).

In NHCS, the teachers are Muslims and they know what they are teaching about compared to at the state school. In RE, the teacher who taught us about Islam is a non-Muslim. So, they do not really understand about Islam. Sometimes, they can't give the exact answer when the students raise questions about Islam. I think we do not learn Islam through textbooks only, but that the role model also plays an important role in education (Khaleesa).

During an interview, a student, Rashda, pointed out that:

In the past few years, my family has thought about moving out. We've been to Saudi Arabia a few times. It is difficult, because we don't have the kind of Islamic education that imports the moral, the value at state school – they don't have correct role models. At state schools, the students are free to mix with different sexes. So, Alhamdulillah, I finally got to study here. We have good teachers to be our inspiration.

The below pie chart shows that all of the 30 respondents agreed *qudwah hasanah* is one of the main criteria to be a role model.

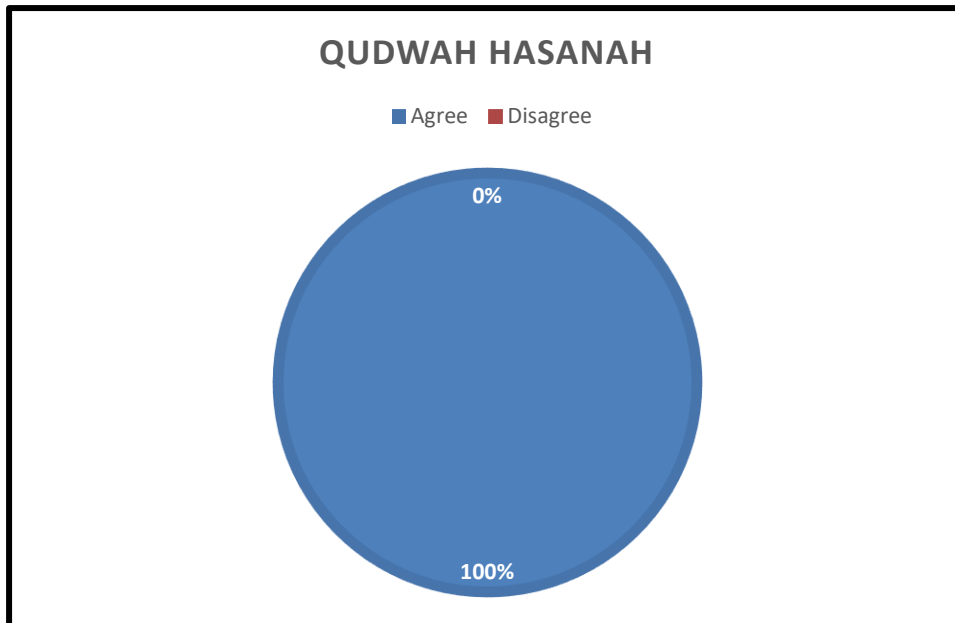


Figure 6.35: Qudwah Hasanah

6.3.3.1.2 Knowledgeable

According to NHCS's students, knowledgeable has become one of the criteria to become a role model. At NHCS, the head teacher claimed that they recruit qualified, observing Muslim teachers, who are all specialists in their subject areas.

All of the teachers you know they are specialized in their subject areas, we do support them, IPD training, training in their own subject area, up to date with changes in their curriculum so they all know how to teach their subjects. The majority of them are B.A holders anyway; some of them are PhD holders like the science teachers (Head Teacher).

A student Amna, insisted that:

I love my role model because she is very knowledgeable. For me my favourite teacher is like a wiki... for example in the class, she always relates the topic to the current issues, brings us around the globe in the class. By doing this, we become more aware about the world and other discipline of knowledge. She really inspired me!

The pie chart below shows that 24 out of 30 respondents agreed to be a knowledgeable is one of the main criteria to be a role model.

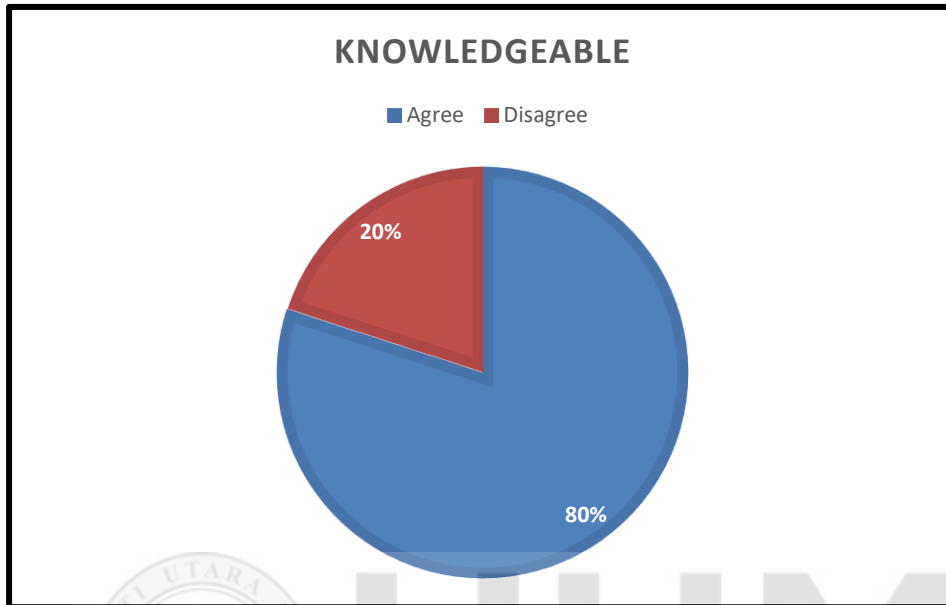


Figure 6.36: Knowledgeable

6.3.3.1.3 Charismatic

Majority of the students agreed that, their role model should have a charisma.

Charismatic in this context refers to someone who has is responsible, professional and has a personality and interpersonal skills. A student, Jannah said that:

What I like about my role model is, she has a charisma. The way she talks, entertains the students, the way she dresses up and her total personality has really inspired me. The charismatic aspect is difficult to explain in words, but you will know it when you found one.

The below pie chart shows that all 30 respondents agreed the charismatic is one of the main criteria to be a role model.

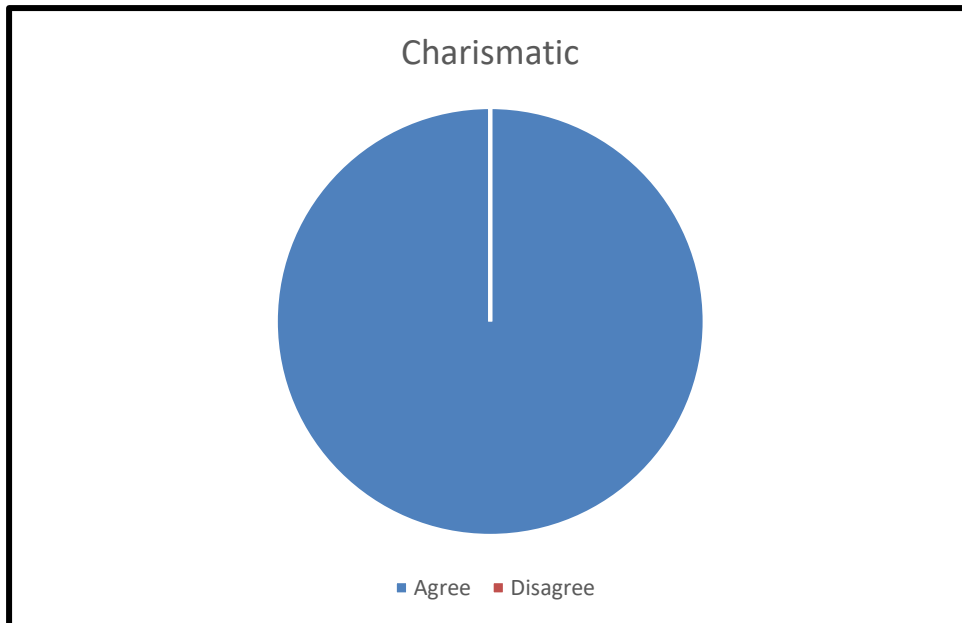


Figure 6.37: Charismatic

6.3.3.2 The Impacts of Role Models to their Identity

Throughout the interviews, majority of the students agreed that, the role models impacted their identity. Thus, I have pointed out 2 (two) favorite answers from the students. They are first; to be a better person, and second; discipline.

6.3.3.2.1 Be a Better Person

Khadeja, student, said that:

It is important for me to have a role model, especially when I am not good enough myself... The teachers (as role models) [is that] it not only teaches about Islam but also trains [the student] to be a better Muslim. They are like murabbis... beautiful inside and outside. So, we have to be like them too.

The below pie chart shows that 29 out of 30 respondents agreed that the role models encouraged them to be a better person.

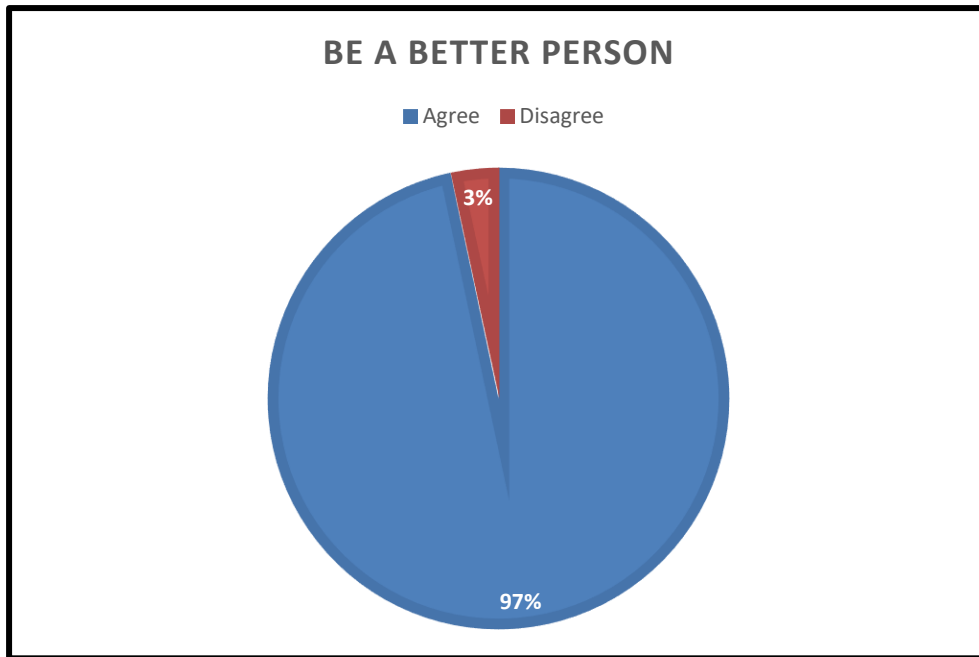


Figure 6.38: Be a Better Person

6.3.3.2.2 Discipline

Tania, student, claimed that:

The role model makes me become more disciplined. It is because in order to be like my role model, I have to discipline myself. For example, I have to study very hard so that I can be successful like her. Have good akhlak.

The below pie chart shows that 25 out of 30 respondents agreed that the role models encouraged them to be a disciplined student.

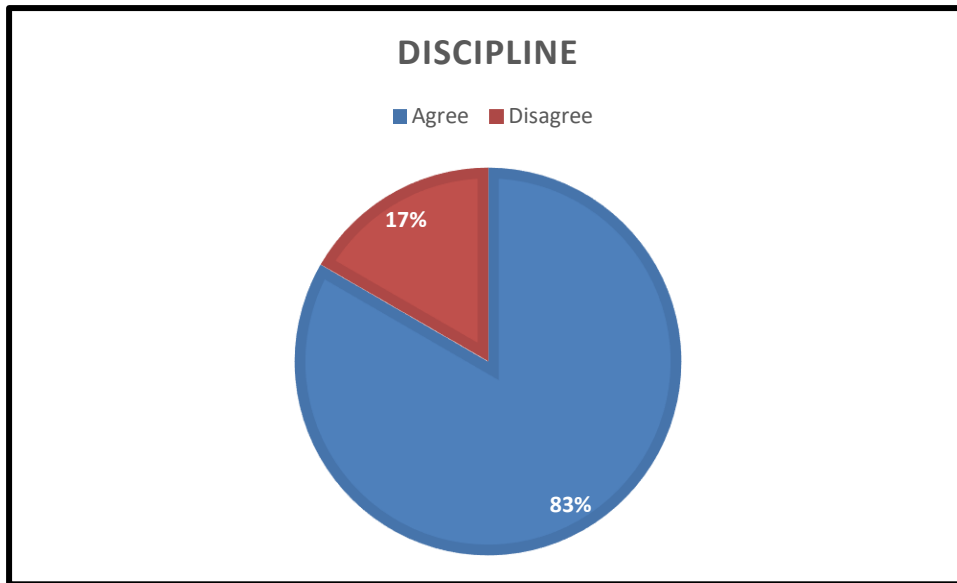


Figure 6.39: Discipline

6.3.3.3 Future Contributions to the Society after Finishing Study

Based on the data gathered, I noticed that majority of the students responded that first; they hope to open free Islamic classes for Islamic knowledge, second; they want to *dakwah* and finally they plan to establish Islamic organisations, funds or charities for Muslim community.

6.3.3.3.1 Open Free Islamic Classes

I think Muslim people need Islamic education to improve themselves. Islamic education is very important. So, I wish, I want to open free Islamic classes for them. This is my responsibility to spread knowledge about Islam, especially when you live in a non-Muslim society... we lack Islamic resources. So, we need people to teach us (Meera)

6.3.3.3.2 Do *Dakwah*

*After I finish study, I want to actively do *dakwah*. Invite people to know about Islam. It is not only for Muslims but for non- Muslim*

too. It is our responsibility to do dakwah. Dakwah is very important for me because it makes us know about Islam. Invite people to do good deeds and prohibit people from doing bad deeds. Again, in this country we have a lot of negative influences, so dakwah is a way to make Muslim close to Islam (Saikah).

6.3.3.3.3 Establish Islamic Organisations, Funds or Charities for Muslim

Community

I want to establish organisations, funds or charities to help Muslim community who are in need. We have a lot of needy, poor and helpless Muslims out there. So, Inshaallah, I wish I would be able to do this ibadah (Ilham).

The below pie chart shows that 8 respondents want to open free Islamic classes, 10 respondents want to do dakwah and 12 respondents want to establish organisations, funds and charities for Muslim society.

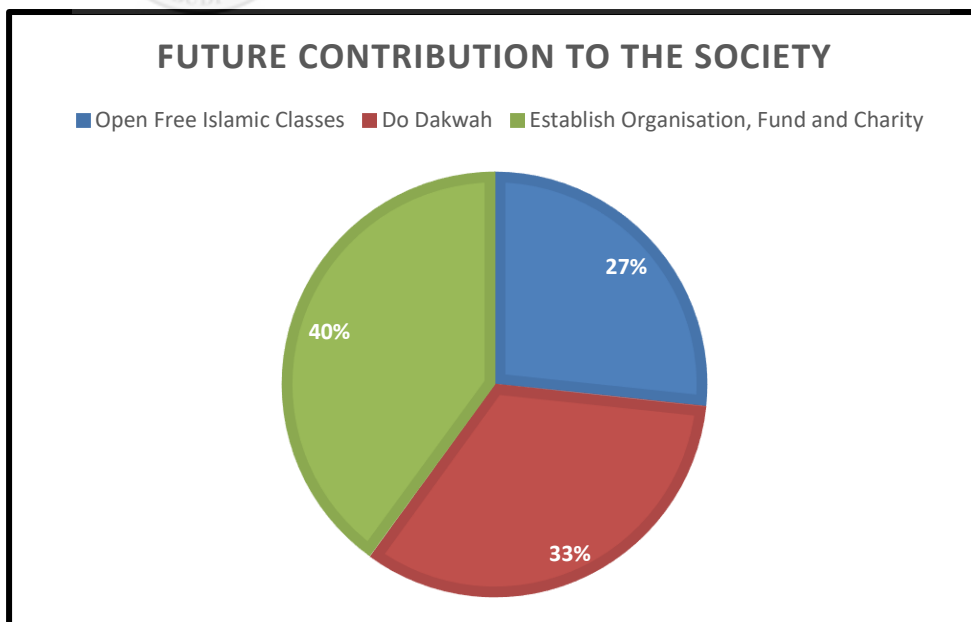


Figure 6.40: Future Contributions to the Society

6.3.4 Conclusion

A basic assumption of NHCS is that it has an educational role in the life of the Muslim community. In its capacity as an independent Muslim girls' school, it supplies the spiritual background to learning. NHCS differs from most other state schools, as it provides Islamic education for Muslim girls. All aspects of NHCS life, such as its curriculum, syllabuses, and environment are blended with Islamic values and are in-line with British government policies. Therefore, in NHCS, it is used to provide students with an Islamic education and to promote the idea of being a good citizen to Muslim children from all backgrounds.

6.4 Comparison Data: Maktab Mahmud (MM) Versus New Horizon Community School (NHCS)

In this section, I compare the data gathered from both schools. The comparison is being done between these schools in the aspects of ethos and environment, RE subjects and teachers as role models.

6.4.1 Ethos and Environments

The ethos and environments have played an important role in shaping the identity. Importantly, there are aspects that helped each school in the shaping of good Islamic ethos. They are school's rules and regulations, school's co- curricular activities, school's culture and school's environment and facilities. Based on the respondents' feedback, each of these four aspects have been broken down into number of themes.

Table 6.1: List of Theme

Ethos	Theme
Rules and Regulations	<i>Shaksiyah</i> , Self- Discipline, Academic excellence and Tolerance and Respect
Co- Curricular & Islamic Activities	<i>Shaksiyah</i> , Active & Brave, Knowledgeable and Leadership Skills
School's Culture	Reading Culture and School's Reputation
Environment and Facilities	No <i>Ikhtilat</i> , Decorations and <i>Musolla</i>

6.4.1.1 School's Rules and Regulations

From the interviews and focus groups session with the students, I have pointed out that majority of students; MM and NHCS; 23 and 30 students respectively, agree that the school's rules and regulations give three impacts to their identity. They are in terms of *shakshiyah*, self- discipline and tolerance and respect.

The below graph shows that 23 out of 30 respondents of MM and all of respondents at NHCS agreed that the rules and regulations of the school can influence their identity.

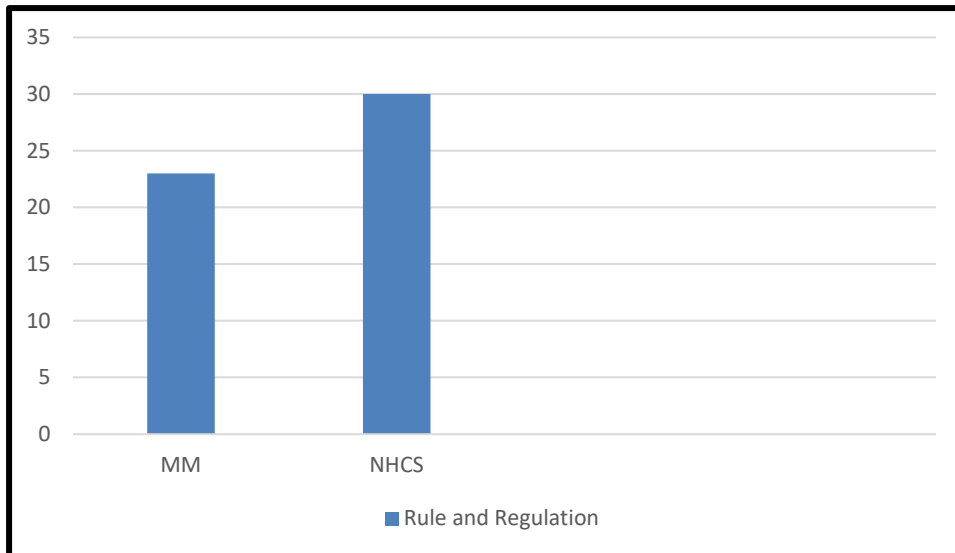


Figure 6.41: Rules and Regulations

Importantly, all the respondents from both schools also agreed that schools' regulations have led them to be a good *shaksiyah* student and build their self-discipline. However, 26 out of 30 respondents of MM and 12 at NHCS agreed in academic excellence and about 7 respondents of MM and 27 respondents at NHCS agreed in tolerance and respect. All of the features will be presented in the graph below.

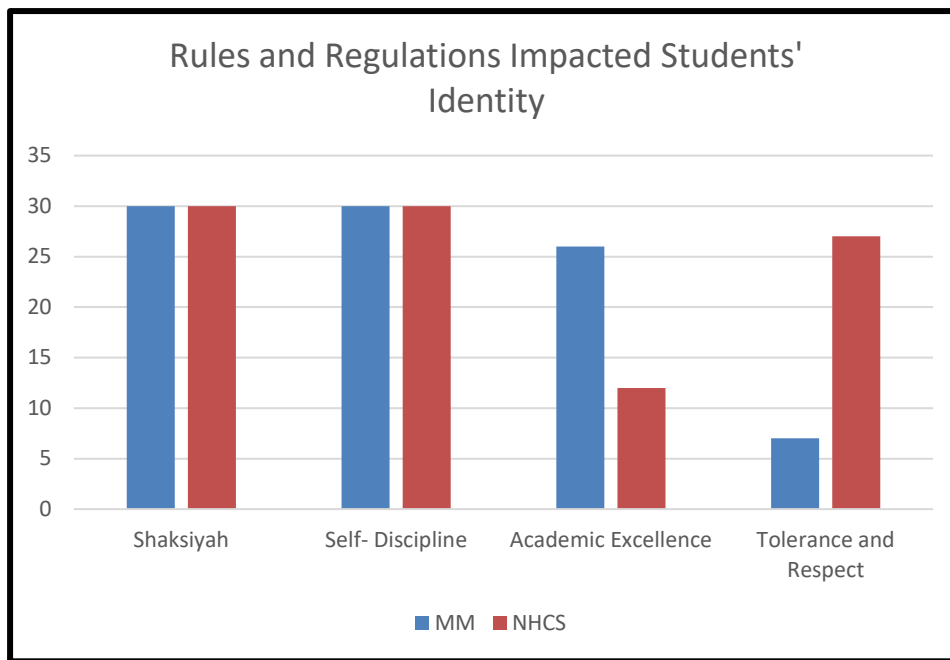


Figure 6.42: Rules and Regulations Impacted Students' Identity

6.4.1.2 School's Co- Curricular and Islamic Activities

The school's activities comprise the curriculum and co-curricular activities. The co-curricular activities include clubs, sports, uniform clubs and so on. From the interviews session with the students, I have pointed out that majority of the students agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities give four (4) impacts to their identity. This co-curricular and Islamic activities have motivated them to have good *shaksiyah*; be active and brave; be knowledgeable and have helped build leadership skills.

The graph below shows that all of 30 respondents at each MM and NHCS agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities have helped in the formation of students' Muslim identity.

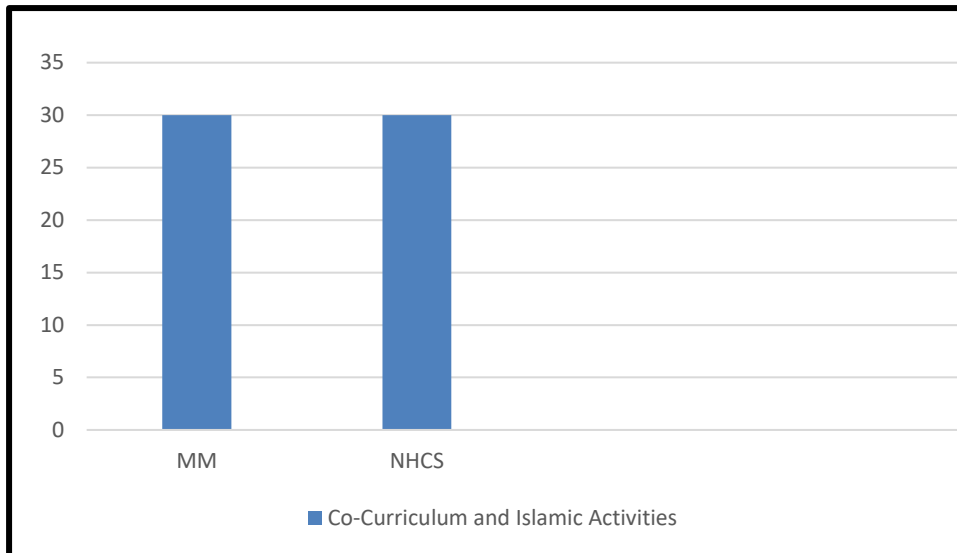


Figure 6.43: Co- Curricular and Islamic Activities

Moreover, the respondents claimed that these co-curricular and Islamic activities helped them in developing *shaksiyah*, bravery, knowledge and leadership skills. 23 out of 30 respondents of MM and 27 at NHCS agreed on being active and brave, 22 respondents of MM and 17 respondents at NHCS agreed on being knowledgeable and 24 of MM respondents and 21 of NHCS respondents agreed on building leadership skills. All of the features will be presented in the graph below.

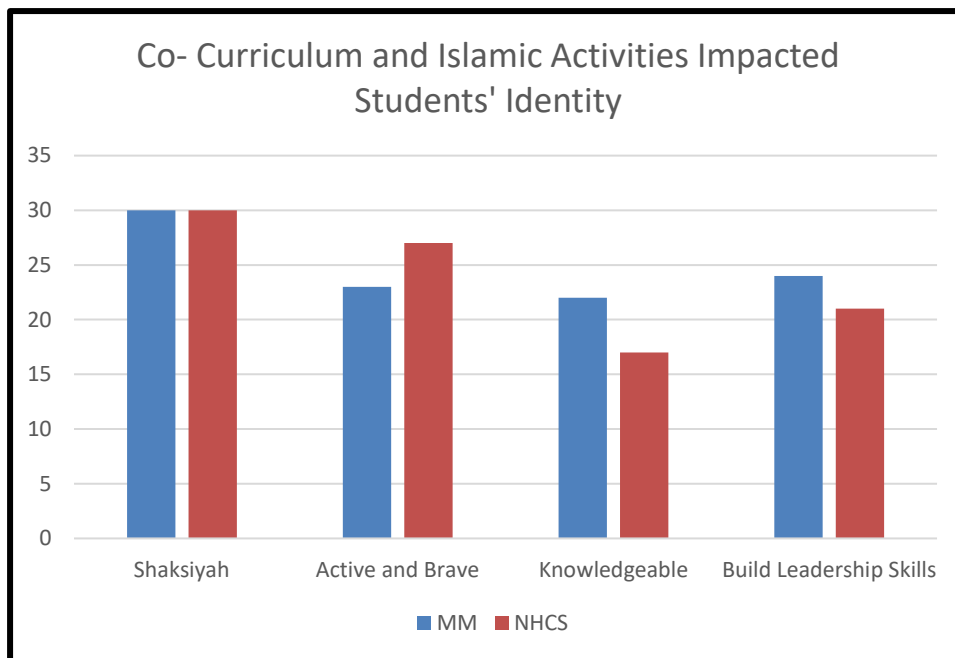


Figure 6.44: Co- Curriculum and Islamic Activities Impacted Students' Identity

6.4.1.3 School's Culture

The school culture in this context comprises the reading culture and the school's reputation. This is due to students' awareness of what does this school stand for? What are the perception and expectation of the outsiders towards the MM and NHCS? What are the contribution of students in order to preserve and maintain the school's reputation? These questions have triggered students to have Islamic identity as a preservation of school's culture. When asked about how to preserve the schools' culture, majority of them claimed that this only can be achieved through reading culture and students should have a spirit to preserve schools' reputation. The percentage for each criteria has be shown in the below graph.

The below graph shows that all of the respondents at MM and 10 out of 30 respondents of NHCS agreed that the school's culture can influence their identity.

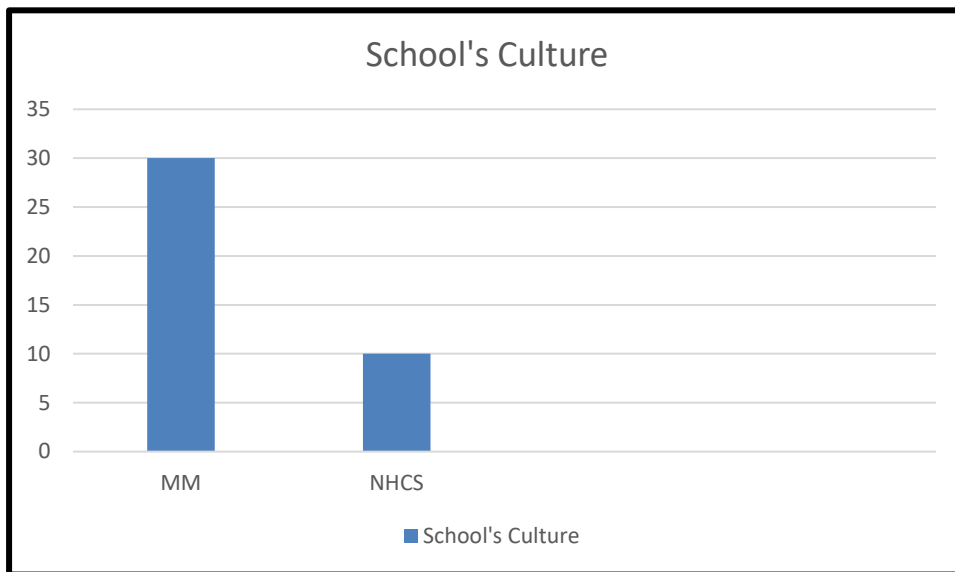


Figure 6.45: School's Culture

The below graph shows that 27 of the MM respondents and 14 respondents of NHCS agreed on reading culture. On the other hand, all the MM respondents and only 13 respondents of the NHCS agreed on preserve the school's reputation can preserve the school's culture and influence their identity.

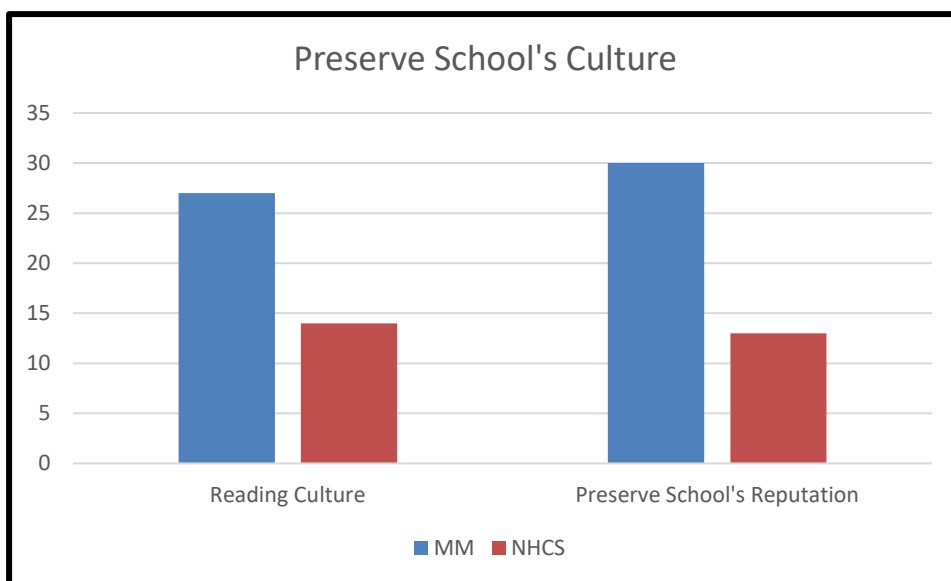


Figure 6.46: Preserve School's Culture

6.4.1.4 Environment and Facilities

The below graph shows that 26 out of 30 respondents of MM and all of the respondents at NHCS agreed that the school's environment and facilities can influence them in the identity formation. The environment includes the *biah* such as no *ikhtilat* between boys and girls, school's decoration and facilities.

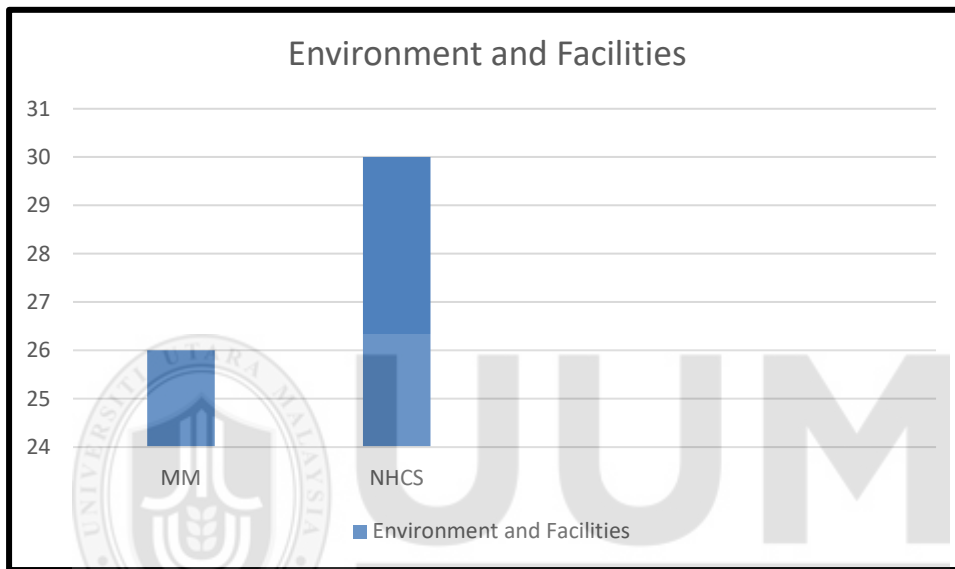


Figure 6.47: Environment and Facilities

6.4.2 The RE Subjects

The data gathered at both schools indicated that majority of the students agreed that through teaching and learning, the RE subjects at these schools have given two significant contributions to themselves. They are first; make them realize the status, right and role of women in Islam and second; the RE subjects have improved their attitude and identity. Each of this data will be presented in the following paragraphs.

6.4.2 .1 Realize the Status, Right and Role of Women in Islam

The below graph shows that 23 out of 30 respondents of MM and all of the respondents at NHCS agreed that the RE subjects have led them to realize the status, rights and roles of women in Islam in which they lead them to be a *Muslimah* and influence them in the identity formation. The graph below shows the number of respondents on this issue.

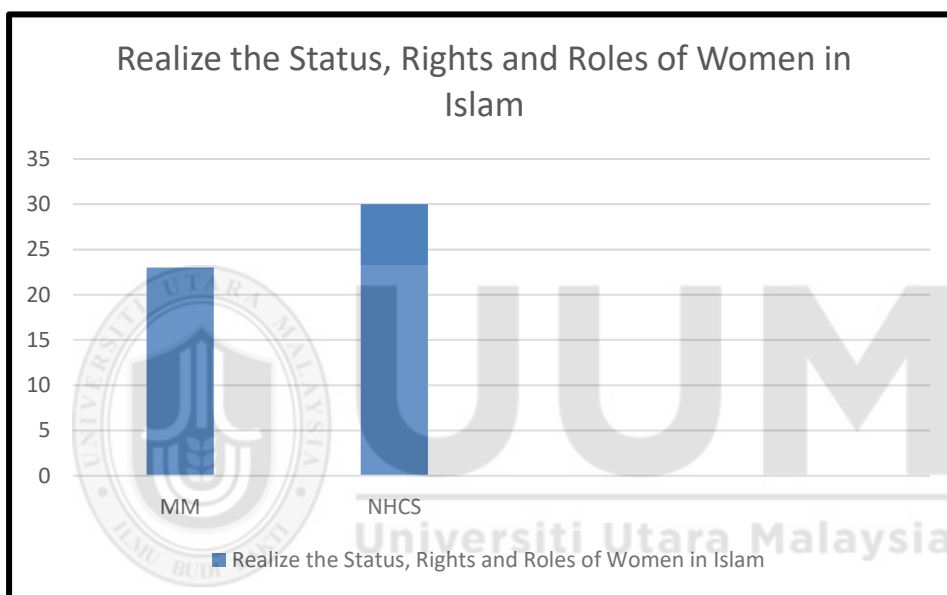


Figure 6.48: Realize the Status, Right, Role of Women in Islam

6.4.2.2 Improve the Attitude and Identity

The below graph shows that 23 out of 30 respondents of MM and 27 out of 30 respondents at NHCS agreed that the RE subjects have led them to improve the attitude and identity.

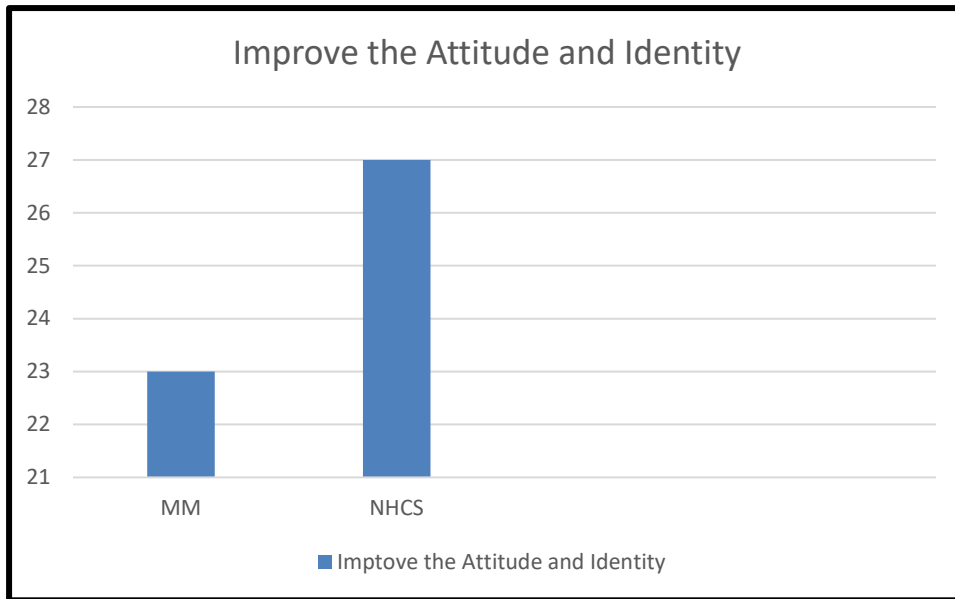


Figure 6.49: Improve the Attitude and Identity

6.4.3 Role Model

Under this section, I have divided it into three discussions, first; what are the qualities of these teachers to become role models, second; what are the impacts of role models to their identity and finally; what are their future contributions to the society after finishing their study?

6.4.3.1 The Qualities of a Teacher to become a Role Model

The data gathered indicate that they are 3 characteristics of role model. They are:

- 1.) Show *Qudwah Hasanah*. Teachers give good example to the students physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually.
- 2.) Knowledgeable. Teachers master the knowledge in various disciplines, and want to see them succeed.
- 3.) Charismatic. Teachers have career. They are working Muslim women yet adhere to Islam. Teachers always practice positive reinforcement and build

confidence to the students. The teachers dress in a professional way, covering the *aurah* as suggested by Islam.

6.4.3.1.1 Charismatic

Based on the above criteria, another surprising finding to emerge from the interviews were the points of number 3. Majority of the students indicated that charismatic was their top priority in modeling. The below graph shows that all of the respondents (30 respondents each) at both MM and NHCS agreed that the charismatic is their top criteria in modelling students.

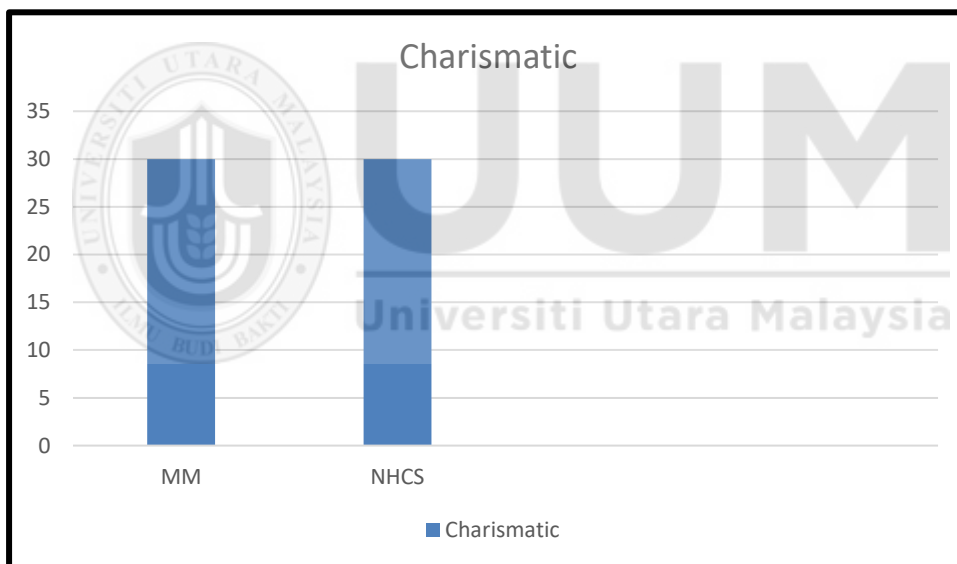


Figure 6.50: Charismatic

6.4.3.1.2 Qudwah Hasanah

The below graph shows that 21 out of 30 respondents of MM and all of respondents at NHCS agreed that the role models give *qudwah hasanah*.

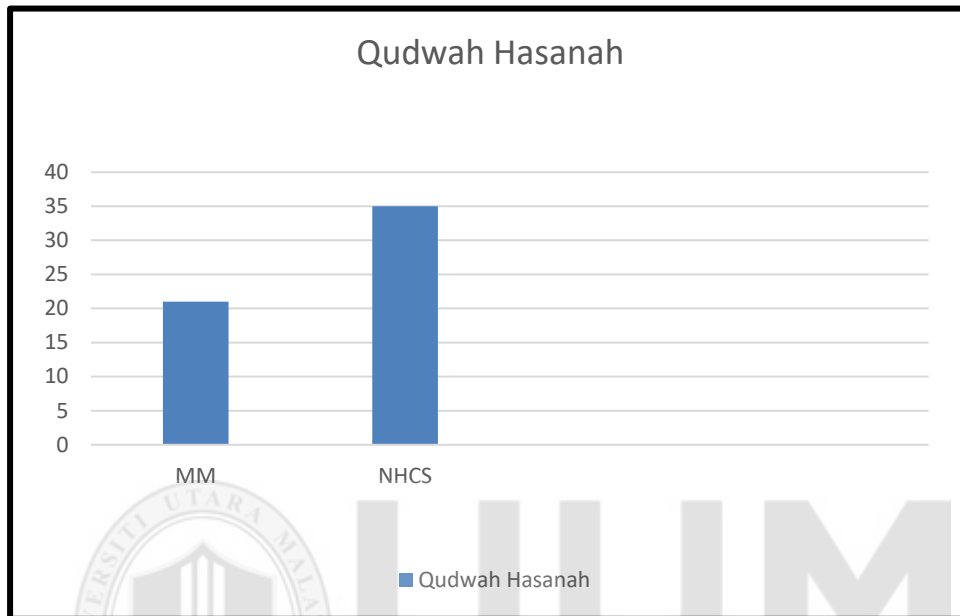


Figure 6.51: Qudwah Hasanah

6.4.3.1.3 Knowledgeable

Majority of the respondents agreed that in order to be a Muslim woman role model, she must have broad knowledge not only in Islam studies *per se*, but in other disciplinary too. The graph below shows that 27 out of 30 respondents of MM and 24 out of 30 respondents at NHCS agreed that the role model should be knowledgeable.

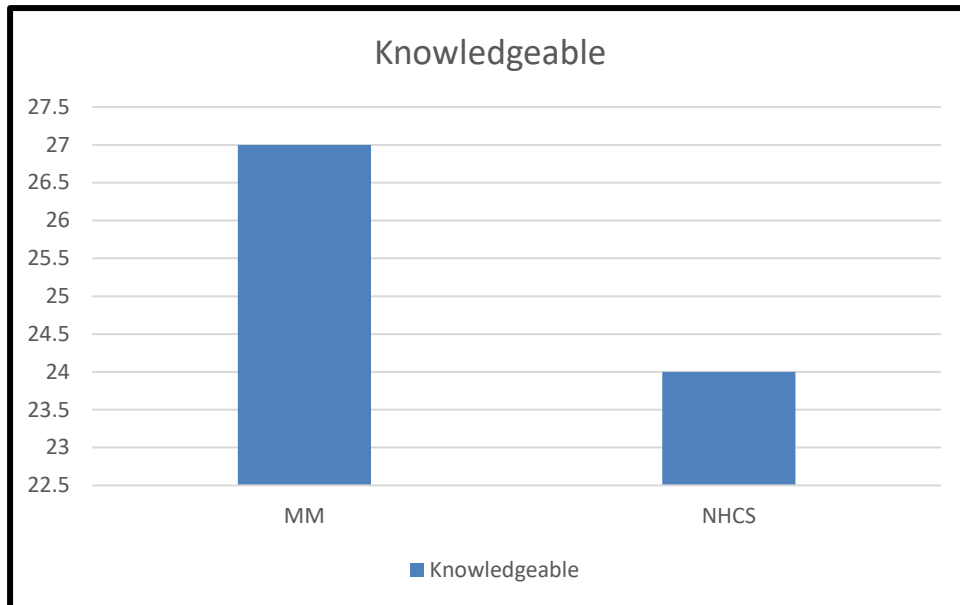


Figure 6.52: Knowledgeable

6.4.3.2 The Impacts of Role Model to their Identity

Throughout the interviews under this section, majority of the respondents agreed that role models at school have impacted their behaviour to be a better person and more disciplined.

6.4.3.2.1 Be a Better Person

The below graph shows that 27 out of 30 respondents of MM and 29 out of 30 respondents at NHCS agreed that the role model has encouraged them to be a better person.

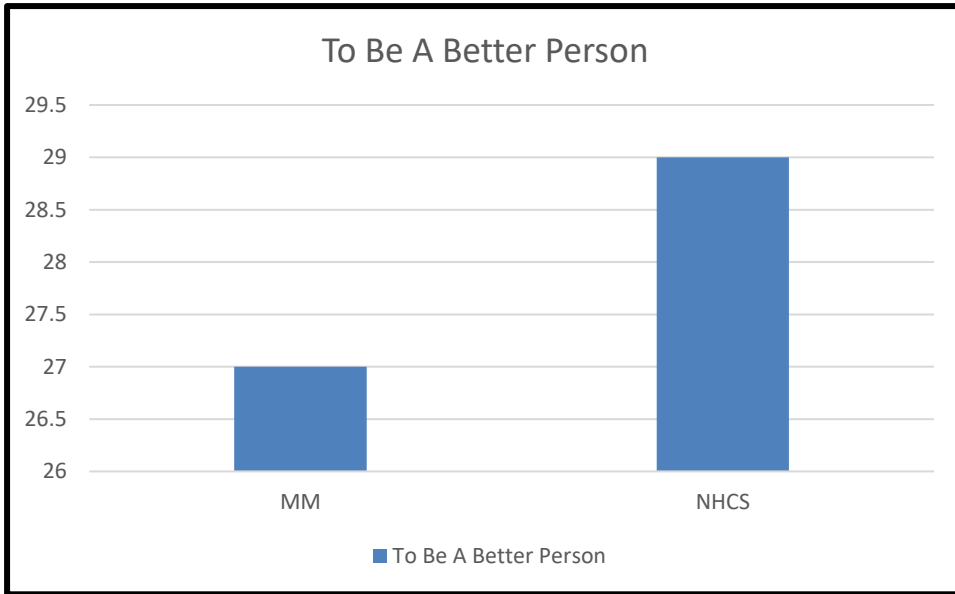


Figure 6.53: Be a Better Person

6.4.3.2.2 Discipline

The below graph shows that 29 out of 30 respondents of MM and 22 out of 30 respondents at NHCS agreed that the role model has encouraged them to be more disciplined.

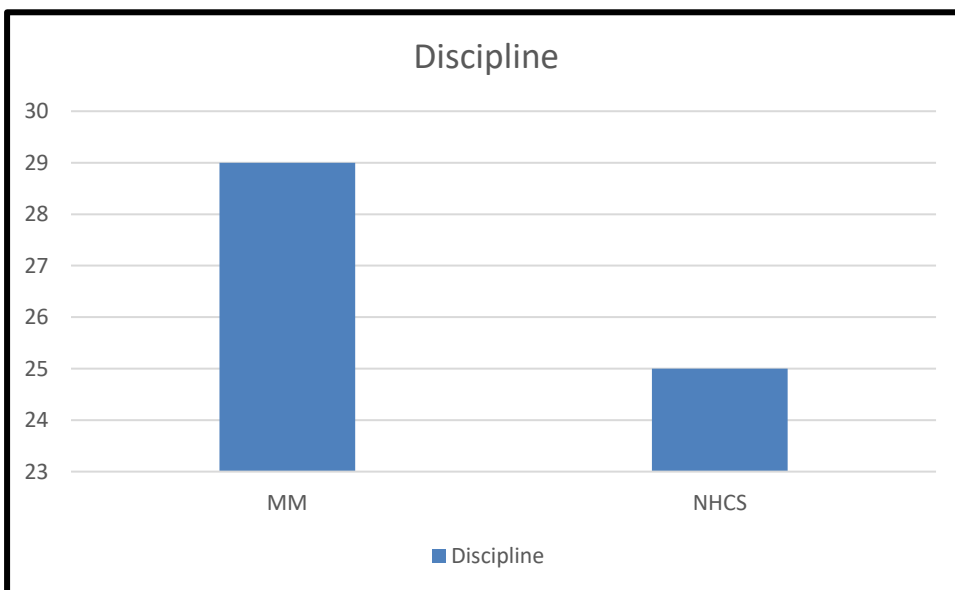


Figure 6.54: Discipline

6.4.3.3 Future Contributions to the Society after Finishing Study

The data gathered indicate that they are 3 favorite contributions that they wanted to do in the future. They are:

- 1.) Open free Islamic classes
- 2.) Do *dakwah*
- 3.) Establish Islamic organisations, funds or charities for Muslim community

6.4.3.3.1 Open Free Islamic Classes

The above graph shows that 20 out of 30 respondents of MM and 12 out of 30 respondents at NHCS choose to open free Islamic classes for community in the future.

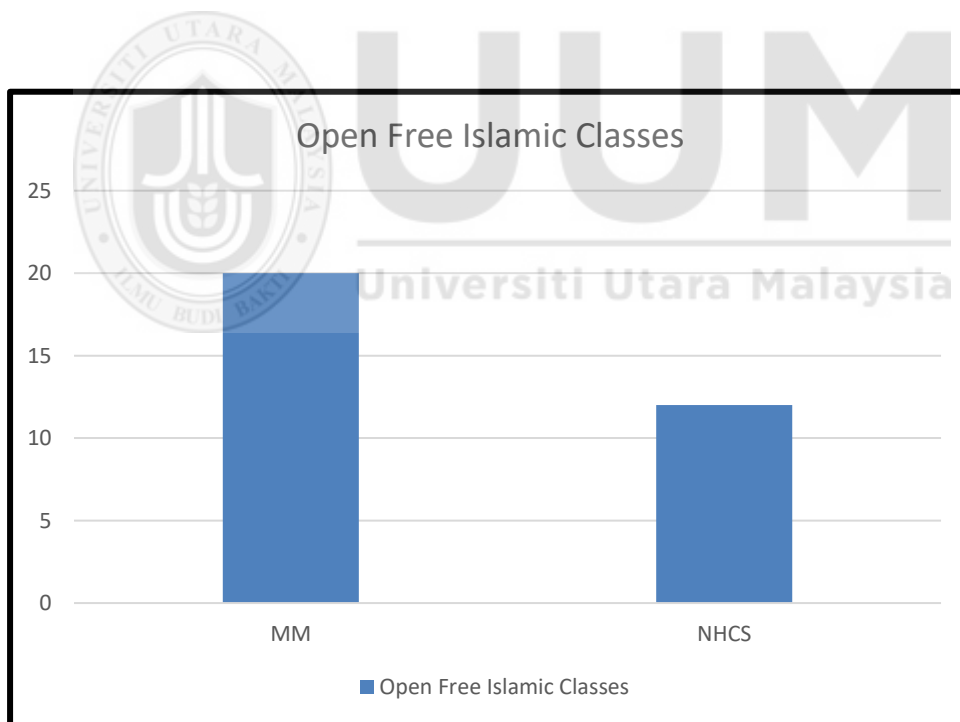


Figure 6.55: Open Free Islamic Classes / Conferences

6.4.3.3.2 Do Dakwah

The graph below shows that 17 out of 30 respondents of MM and 26 out of 30 respondents at NHCS choose to do *dakwah* in the future.

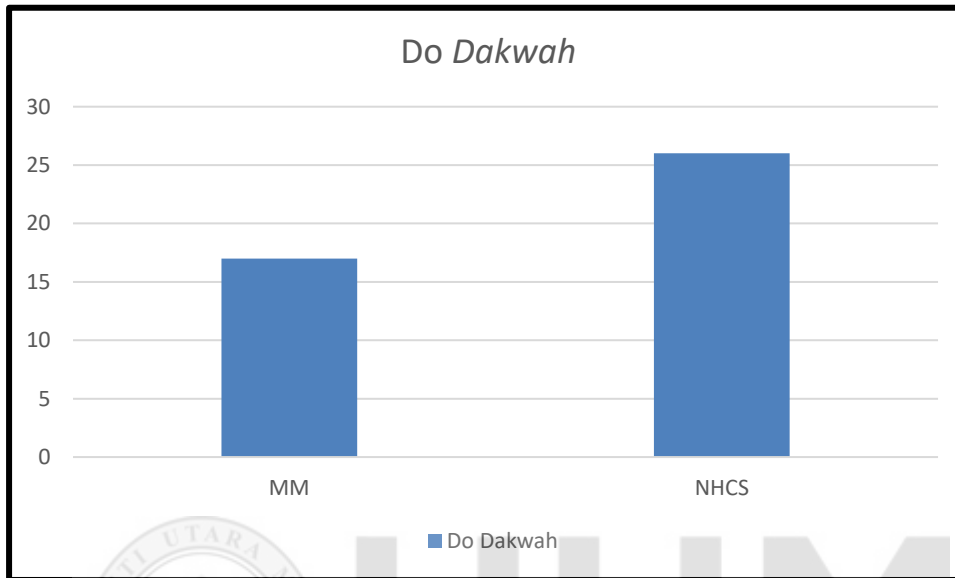


Figure 6.56: Do Dakwah

6.4.3.3.3 Establish Islamic Organisations, Funds or Charities for Muslim Community

The below graph shows that 11 out of 30 respondents of MM and 26 out of 30 respondents at NHCS choose to establish Islamic organisations, funds or charities for Muslim community in the future.

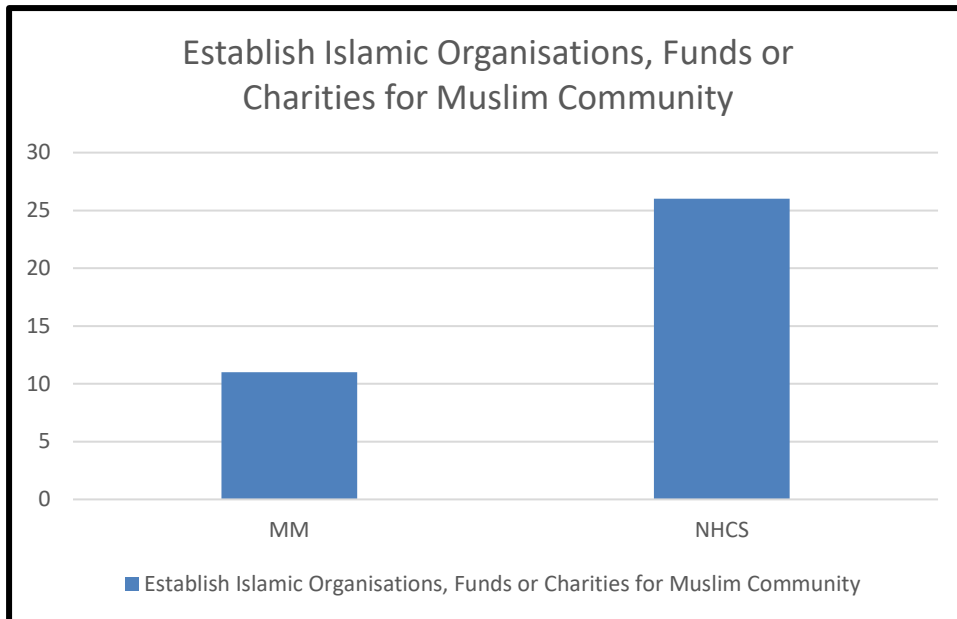


Figure 6.57: Establish Islamic Organisations, Funds or Charities for Muslim Community

6.4.4 Conclusion

A basic assumption of MM and NHCS is that they have an educational role in the life of the Muslim community. Indeed, they supply the spiritual background to learning. Both schools differ from most other state schools, as they provide Islamic education for both Muslim girls. All aspects of MM and NHCS life, such as its curriculum, syllabuses, and environment are blended with Islamic values which indirectly can help in the shaping of Muslim identity to the students.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concentrates on the analysis of the case studies, the role of Islamic schools in Kedah and Leeds in the shaping of Muslim women identity to the students and how different it is in comparison to Leeds. The data gathered from three instruments; participant observations, interviews and focus groups were presented in the number of graphs and charts (see chapter 5). The objective of the study is to gain primary information regarding the mechanisms of Muslim women identity formation among students at schools both in Kedah and Leeds. The findings are discussed in sequences from the guided interviews. The formation of Muslim women identity among students at school are much depended on the schools' ethos and environments, RE subjects and the role models. As this research has conducted two case studies at two different contexts; Muslim and non-Muslim country, the result of the study has also been influenced by policy, culture and beliefs of the contexts. All of these mechanisms will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

7.2 Ethos and Environments

From the data gathered, many of the students have agreed that the schools created the Islamic ethos and environments from the 'within' and 'without'. From the 'within' means that it has lifted their Islamic spirit and soul. For example, throughout the observation at those schools, both schools have played *Quranic* verses and recitation of the *doa* before and after each lesson. Those actions can lift the Islamic spirit and soul. In the Quran, Allah says:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرٍ لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ ۝



“Truly there is a reminder in this for anyone who has a heart, or who listens attentively with presence of mind.” (50:37)

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ۝



“When the Quran is read, listen attentively, and fall silent, so that you may be blessed with mercy.” (7:204)

From the above *ayahs* it was clearly mentioned that when a person listens to the *Quran* with attention and heart, a Muslim can develop fear, love, respect, and a sense of obedience and submission towards Allah the Almighty. Therefore, listening to the *Quran* daily serves as a constant reminder for a Muslim and cause them to receive blessings and mercy of Allah the Almighty.

On the other hand, from the ‘without’ were enforced through the school’s rules and regulations, school’s culture, school’s co-curricular and Islamic activities and school’s decoration and facilities. The ‘within’ has built the inner strength to the students and later to be enforced by the ‘without’. The combination of ‘within’ and ‘without’ of ethos and environment in this context has motivated the students to be in line with the school’s philosophy⁷⁰. Therefore, Muslims parents tend to send their children at Muslim schools to elevate their children’s educational attainments within a Muslim

⁷⁰ Generally, these schools want to produce *insan kamil*, good student with academic excellence.

learning environment. Many Muslim parents believe that Islamic schools offer ‘the most conducive environment for their children, and [are] most likely to inculcate common values and respect for Islam’ (Ansari, 2005: 326; Din, 2017). Each of those the ‘without’ will be discussed in detail in the following paragraph.

7.2.1 School’s Rules and Regulations

The rules and regulations of the school is also one of the factors that affected the students’ identity. Indeed, the school’s philosophy and the school’s regulations are inter-related. The list of rules and regulations at both schools are in parallel with the aims and objectives and vision and mission of the schools (discussed in chapter 5). As Islamic schools, generally I found that there are similarities in aims and objectives as well as the vision and mission at both schools which is to produce an *insan kamil*.

The design of rules and regulations at school nowadays is more challenging than before. It is because the school management should take into account the current challenges, issues and problems of the social context. In Malaysia, even though it is a Muslim country, apart from the negative peer-pressure, the social media, modern gadgets, influx of information and technologies have given negative impacts to the students too (Tamuri, 2006; Nik Rosila, 2013).

On the other hand, in a non- Muslim country like the UK, the NHCS students have faced more challenges. Due to the current UK context, the result of the study indicates that the number of NHCS respondents is higher than the MM. As I stated earlier, the UK context is more challenging and bounded by the culture, policy and values of the wider British society. As stated on the school’s website (NHCS):

Our aim is to create a happy and caring environment in which pupils are able to develop intellectually, spiritually, socially and emotionally. Pupils are taught to develop tolerance, understanding, interfaith etiquette, a sense of responsibility and respect towards people of all races, religions, and cultures. This is an integral part of the ethos of the school.

In the NHCS, for example, the school's philosophy has also stressed on the responsibility as a Muslim British citizen. Generally, the aims and objectives of this subject are in-line with state policy in the sense that they also teach children about tolerance and respect, and how to play a constructive role in their schools and broader communities (Coles, 2008; Cherti et al., 2011; Shain, 2011; Breen, 2018). As a Muslim British citizen, they should know how to interpret Islam into context especially in the climate of Islamophobia and the war on terrorism which is viral around the world. Similarly, the British government policies concerning Muslims were changing rapidly due to the events of 9/11⁷¹ and especially 7/7⁷². Questions of community cohesion and preventing violent extremism have impacted Muslim life in Britain including the Islamic educational sector. Muslim schools are under the spotlight of the British government and the media, especially after the events of 9/11 and 7/7 (Breen, 2018). Although the establishment of independent as well as state-funded Muslim schools is still approved in the UK, the government and media nevertheless scrutinise them frequently.

⁷¹ Since 9/11 and the 2001 summer riots in Northern English cities, the British government has produced various initiatives to prevent segregation and promote 'community cohesion' through increasing integration between British Muslims and the wider society. For example, it launched both the Anti-Terrorism Act (2000) and the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Bill (2001) to prevent violence and to promote cohesion and integration. In February 2002, a Home Office White Paper, 'Secure Borders, Safe Haven', proposed a new citizenship ceremony for Britain. An oath of allegiance and language tests were finally implemented in 2004 (McLoughlin, 2009).

⁷² After the 7/7 bombing, the government amended its policy by launching 'The Prevention of Terrorism Act' (2005). Under this act, the government set out its agenda to morally and financially support those who aided in the prevention of terrorism. Money was given to various organisations undertaking such work (McLoughlin, 2009).

This battle involves the reconstructing of religion in diaspora *per se*, most especially in terms of the limits and the possibilities suggested by the role of Islamic schools, mosques and movements in institutionalizing Islam in Britain. Moreover, the events of 9/11 and 7/7 has made the British state even more reticent concerning the establishment of Islamic schools, even though Muslims are entitled to establish such schools under the Education Act 1944 (Halstead, 2005; Shain, 2011; Breen, 2018). For instance, in January 2005, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) chief, David Bell, speaking to the BBC, expressed his concern that faith-based schools do not teach children enough about a common heritage and need to do more to promote principles of mutual tolerance and social inclusion. Similarly, on 10 March 2009, the then Schools Secretary, Mr. Ed Balls, claimed that private faith schools failed to prepare students for British life. He ordered OFSTED to investigate independent faith schools to find out if they were meeting their obligations to teach students about other religions and to promote tolerance and harmony between different cultures (Telegraph, 2009).

This remains a hotly debated issue, and in November 2009 the Conservative leader David Cameron disagreed about the previous Labour government's decision to fund two Muslim independent schools under the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) scheme. He alleged that the Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation (ISF) school, in Tottenham, north London had links with extremists and were not eligible for state funding as he claimed that this school 'was set up by an "extremist Islamist foundation" and was a front for the radical Muslim group, Hizb ut Tahrir' (AMS-UK, 2009). However, after an investigation made by Haringey Council, it was found that no evidence of "inappropriate influence" at the ISF (AMS-UK, 2009). There were

feelings of discontent and deep disappointment within the Muslim community about the way David Cameron and some of his senior colleagues used Islamic schools for political expediency. This disappointment was expressed by the Chairman of AMS during that time, Dr Mohammad Mukaddam, on the AMS's website as follows:

Instead of relying on dubious reports and making wild allegations, which divide our communities, Mr. Cameron should take a leaf out of the book of some of his own party members who have taken trouble to visit schools and see some of the good work that is being done. He should also take the trouble to read OFSTED reports on Muslim schools, which show clearly that they are doing just as much if not more to enhance community cohesion and promote excellence in education as their state school counterparts (AMS-UK).

Therefore, school's regulation is an important aspect to be emphasized in order to make it relevant and equivalent to the British government policy and demand. In fact, this school's regulation also can be applied outside the schools especially in areas which are related to the religious obligations such as *aurah*, *ikhtilat*, *ibadah*, *adab* and manners. Indeed, they need 'an enhanced awareness of religion to develop their socio-religious identity' (Haw, 1998: 152; Breen, 2018).

Importantly, majority of the respondents from both schools agreed that schools' regulations have led them to be a good *shaksiyah* student and helped them build self-discipline, aim for academic excellence and practice tolerance and respect within community.

Shaksiyah

All of the sixty (60) respondents from both schools agreed that the school's rules and regulations have developed good *shaksiyah* to the students. Islam emphasized on having a good *shaksiyah*. As Allah says in the *Quran*: '*Be Kind, as Allah has been kind to you*' (Al-Qasas 28:77). Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said

'The best amongst you are those who have the best manners and character.' (Narrated by Bukhari).

"No deed that will be placed on the scale of deeds [on the Day of Judgement] will be heavier than good character. Indeed, a person with good character will attain the rank of those with a good record of voluntary fasts and prayers." (Narrated by Tirmizi).

The respondents talked about having a sense of Islamic identity, obey the rules and regulations and listening to teachers' advice as part of *shaksiyah* development. The rules and regulations at both schools are seen as offering an opportunity for students to understand the Islamic way of life.

In fact, through these rules and regulations, they were nurtured and supported by the staff. Many Muslim teachers and parents have concerns about *aurah*, *ikhtilat* between gender and appropriate Muslim women identity. Building on this, both schools have designed the rules and regulations based on *shariah*. The rules and regulations are a medium to maintain the integrity of Muslim students' identity, value and culture's context (Izfanna & Nik Ahmad Hisyam, 2012).

Discipline

All of the sixty (60) respondents from both schools agreed that the school's rules and regulations have developed discipline to the students. Both schools have played a constructive way in the enforcement of school's regulations. For example, both school implemented the merit system. In both contexts, the merit system has encouraged the students to obey the rules and this gradually has shaped Muslim students' identity. As Allah says in the *Quran*:

Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded (An-Nahl:90).

All respondents were clear that the schools worked to develop a disciplined student through rules and regulation; to enforce the students' Islamic identity in a holistic manner within an Islamic ethos and environment where there is a strong sense that the students take responsibility for their own actions (Halstead, 2004; Hussain, 2004; Dangor, 2005; Ahmed & Sabir, 2018).

Academic Excellence

However, both school were significant different in terms of academic excellence. The number of NHCS is fewer than the MM. Most of the NHCS's respondents said that, the aim and objective of the regulations generally is to make students become more disciplined and have good *shaksiyah*. They claimed that sometimes a student who gets excellent marks in examination is not necessarily excellent in identity. Yet, in some cases these excellent students dare to disobey the school's rules and regulations especially in the issue of them having a love interest and dating boys outside the school. On the other hand, the MM students strongly agreed that there is a significant

relationship between rules and regulations and academic excellence. This is due to the reputation of MM in the fact that MM has produced students with good Muslim identity and academic excellence.

In deed, the schools' rules and regulations is an very important aspect towards academic excellence, while lack of it usually gives rise to a lot of problems such as irregular attendance and punishment (Dunham, 1984; Vakalisa & Jacobs, 2001; Dawo & Simatwa, 2010; Sureiman, 2010; Tikoko & Bomett, 2011; Gitome et al., 2013; Mussa, 2015). 'Effective rules and regulations help in the achievement of goals, expectation and responsibility in students' (Dunham, 1984:66).

Tolerance and Respect

The number of respondents at NHCS is higher than the MM due to the UK's context. Being a respectful and tolerance person is very important especially when the person staying in a multicultural community like the NHCS (Halstead, 2004; Haw, 2011). NHCS provides secondary education for girls aged 11 to 16 years (Year 7 to Year 11) from various ethnic backgrounds, including Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Arabs, Afghans and Somalis. Technically, the school has embraced an Islamic culture and ethos that can include different backgrounds and ethnicities under one roof in learning about Islam. However, 90% of the pupils are Pakistani, with 10% from other ethnicities, most coming from the surrounding area near the centre of Leeds, but a few coming from slightly further afield, such as from Morley. Throughout the fieldwork, I have categorised this term into two; being respectful and tolerant among inside the school and second; outside the school.

Inside the School

The newly migrated family is one of NHCS's target markets. Children from Muslim countries or religious families will often experience culture shock when they enter a school in Britain, because of the differences between cultural and religious traditions (Haw, 2011; Din, 2017; Breen, 2018). Thus, in the rules and regulations, NHCS has also emphasized on the being tolerance and respectful to others. As stated on the school's website (NHCS):

Our aim is to create a happy and caring environment in which pupils are able to develop intellectually, spiritually, socially and emotionally. Pupils are taught to develop tolerance, understanding, interfaith etiquette, a sense of responsibility and respect towards people of all races, religions, and cultures. This is an integral part of the ethos of the school.

Outside the School

The sense of tolerance and being a respectful person is important especially when the students live in a non- Muslim country. Most of the students claimed that the respect and tolerance elements are important so that they know how to engage with the wider society (Haw, 2011; Din, 2017; Breen, 2018).

7.2.2 School's Co- Curricular and Islamic Activities

The school's activities comprise the curriculum and co-curricular activities. The co-curricular activities include clubs, sports, uniform clubs and so on. From the interview sessions with the students, I have pointed out that majority of the students agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities give four (4) impacts to their identity. This co-curricular and Islamic activities have helped them to have good *shaksiyah*; be active and brave; be knowledgeable and have helped them build leadership skills.

Shaksiyah

Majority of the respondents at both schools agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities can develop *shaksiyah* to the students. The schools conducted several co-curricular activities and programmes such as talks, *usrah* or study circle, Islamic events and festival celebrations like *Maulidur Rasul*, *Isra' and Mikraj* and so on. These co-curricular programmes develop the students' identity, knowledge, skills, potentials and strengthen their attachment to Islam. Both schools have planned varieties of activities for the students. All of those activities generally focus on the Islamic knowledge or *fardh ain* as well as the *fardh kifayah*. *Fardh ain* program like *usrah* about Islamic pillar and faith, while for the *fardh kifayah* like community services and so on. Both *fardh ain* and *fardh kifayah* can influence the development of good *shaksiyah* to the students.

In deed, all the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities at both schools include the elements of *nasihah* (advice). As the Prophet Muhammad SAW said that:

"The religion is naseehah (sincerity)." We said, "To whom?" He (peace be upon him) said, "To Allah, His Book, His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk (Narrated by Muslim).

Active and Brave

Majority of the respondents at both schools agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities encouraged them to be active and brave. Both schools have planned varieties of activities for the students. With regards to the *fardh ain* dan *fardh kifayah*, most of the students agreed that these activities have triggered their courage and bravery as well as have taught them to be independent. Based on the data given by

students from both schools, the number of respondents at NHCS is slightly higher as it is hard to find a single- sex Muslim girls school in Britain. Thus, the NHCS shows the clear benefits of Muslim schooling for Muslim pupils especially the girls as a way to preserve *izzat* and *sharam* in the diaspora and modern society (Jawad & Benn, 2003; Din, 2017), to provide opportunities for girls to explore their potentials in a female-dominated atmosphere (Haw, 1998; Jawad & Benn, 2003; Halstead, 2005, Din, 2017), and finally as a stepping- stone for girls to become active, educated and positive *Muslimahs* in the future. Indeed, the school's activity has given a clear advantage in which the girls could explore their potential in a non-threatening environment and express their opinions without having any insecurity (Haw, 1998; Jawad & Benn, 2003; Halstead, 2005; Din, 2017, Breen, 2018).

Knowledgeable

Majority of the respondents at both schools agreed that the school's co-curricular and Islamic activities encouraged them to be knowledgeable. On top of that, they gain Islamic knowledge through informal discussion which is more relaxed, closed and detailed. Moreover, the topics being discussed are from various perspectives which are different from what they have learnt from the textbooks and classroom. The key motivation to encourage students to gain knowledge is by trying to make it fun, get them interested and put in the effort (Faris, 2012).

There are many Islamic texts that highlight the importance and virtues of knowledge. As Allah says the virtues of knowledge in the *Quran*: '*Allah raises those who believe and have knowledge in degrees*' (58:11)

The Prophet Muhammad SAW also said that:

‘Seeking knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim’ (Narrated by Ibn Majjah).

‘The angels lower their wings over the seeker of knowledge, being pleased with what he does. The inhabitants of the heavens and the earth and even the fish in the depth of the oceans seek forgiveness for him’ (Narrated by Abu Dawud).

Build Leadership Skills

Data at both schools have shown that the respondents agreed that the school’s co-curricular and Islamic activities helped them to build leadership skills. It is because the focus of these activities also concerns on the social life and the preparation for students to fit into society as vicegerent of Allah in the future.

Based on the data given, it is shown that the number of respondents at MM is slightly higher than the NHCS. The activities that I want to highlight which can give justification of this trend is the community services at both schools. At the MM, the selected students or members of *Nuqaba*’ leadership will go out to the society and share the Islamic knowledge to the community. For example, they have been appointed as a volunteer facilitator for any Islamic programs organized by the local organisations. By doing this, they can prepare themselves in terms of knowledge and leadership skills. Meanwhile, at NHCS this kind of activity may preserve the reputation and good name of NHCS as an Islamic school rather than to build leadership skills. This is due to the media and policymakers who often perceive *madrasahs* and other Islamic schools as isolated and invisible to wider society – a criticism that is frequently directed at Islamic schools even though many of them have

reached out to wider society in a number of ways, including holding ‘open days’ and doing voluntary work cleaning parks and streets (Halstead, 2005; Gilliat- Ray, 2010).

However, through the above activities, the students from both schools can gain knowledge and experience as well as to shape Muslim women identity, develop confidence and courage in themselves as a preparation to reach out to the local society in the future. Besides, it can be geared towards providing them with skills and knowledge that will empower them to lead independent lives and are able to give inspiration and contributions to the communities.

7.2.3 School’s Culture

The school culture in this context comprises the reading culture and the school’s reputation. This is due to students’ awareness of what does this school stand for? What are the perception and expectation of the outsiders towards the MM and NHCS? What are the contributions of students in order to preserve and maintain the school’s reputation? Those questions have triggered students to have Muslim women identity as a preservation of school’s culture. When asked about how to preserve the schools’ culture, majority of them claimed that this only can be achieved through reading culture and students should have a spirit to preserve their schools’ reputation.

The number of respondents at NHCS is lower than the MM due to the lack of book resources. The library at this school is small and the books are limited to the certain subject areas which is more to the academic sources. Thus, majority of the students are not only relying on reading in order to have good *sakhsiyah*. They have to make their own initiatives such as reading books online internet, or books from outside and

so on. In fact, many Islamic schools have received a lot of criticisms from OFSTED especially on the issues of poor facilities, inadequate resources, safety standards, teachers' qualifications and so on (Halstead, 2005; Breen, 2018).

On the other hand, for the MM, literally, this school emphasized on the development of Islamic identity together with the academic purposes. Thus, this emphasis lead to the reading culture. Undoubtedly, the importance of academic attainment is parallel to the parents, society and state policy's demands. For example, first; to enroll the students to the tertiary level, they must fulfill the minimum requirement at least 5As in Malaysian Higher Certificate (SPM, Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia). Second; the SPM qualification is important in applying for job vacancies and has become the main criteria for most employers for job recruitment.

The MM is higher than the NHCS as the school's culture is much influenced by its reputation, achievement, history and legacy. Since its existence, MM school has established a good branding in Islamic education. In fact, this is evident through the number of alumni who became state stakeholders and policy makers in the Malaysian government and yet still adhere to the Muslim identity.

On the other hand, for the NHCS, the low number of the respondents is due to the fact that NHCS was a new school, which was opened in 1994. Thus, the school is still working on the development of a good school's culture. However, this school emphasized on the reputation of Islam. As they are living in a non-Muslim country, they have to show that Muslims do not disaggregate and discriminate. Islamic schools are not as a place to spread hatred but to teach students to be engaged with, be

respectful and tolerant to the wider society. The good report from both OFSTED and BSI in NHCS proved that this school has made good efforts in providing a better education to the children.

7.2.4 Environment and Facilities

Most of the students agreed that the ethos and environment at this school have affected their behaviour to be a good Muslim identity student. The environment at this school includes the *biah* such as no *ikhtilat* between boys and girls, school's decoration and facilities.

Environment

The numbers of NHCS is higher than the MM because the context of NHCS- it is located in a non- Muslim country. Haw (1998; 2011), Jacobson (1998), Modood, (2005), Halstead (2010) Lewis (2010) and Din (2017) noted that the majority of Muslim parents that migrated to Britain were very worried about their daughters' being educated in British state schools. This is because of conflicts between some aspects of contemporary British culture and Islam, such as the free mixing between different sexes, alcohol-use among British teenagers, and the loss of *adab* (manners) and *akhlaq* (virtue) as a woman. Therefore, parents need a school that can provide the only safe environments, 'devoid of any explicit threats to their value system' (Haw, 1998: 155-157; Shaw, 1998; Halstead; 2005).

Importantly, single-sex Muslim independent schools have been sought by small numbers of Muslim parents since they began to arrive in Britain in 1950s and 1960s (Shaw, 1998; Halstead, 2005). This type of school represents one of the mediums for

preserving and teaching Islam to their offspring. NHCS was built to provide education to Muslim girls at the secondary level, but this school also addresses many parents' more general concerns about their girls after they reach puberty (Sarwar, 1991, Shaw, 1998; Halstead, 2005; Din, 2017).

There are clear advantages to students being educated in both a single-sex environment and an Islamic environment, in which the girls could explore their potential in a non-threatening environment. As Halstead (2005) puts it, childrens' potentials can be maximized if they are educated within a positive and supportive space. As noted in chapter five, parents at NHCS are mostly educated and professional who are aware about the importance of an Islamic education. This awareness is directed at their children also, as they seek the best ways to raise them.

Facilities

From my observation, the resources, facilities and decorations at both schools are at satisfactory level, with the potential for better improvement as the schools look forward to extending their facilities. Meanwhile, for the school decoration, both schools have decorated the school buildings, walls and pedestriars with Islamic calligraphy, verses of the *Quran*, *hadiths*, Islamic idioms and inspirational words. The school's facilities like *musolla* has become a center of Islamic knowledge and events. For instance, at MM they were also called as *Markaz* (Islamic centre). Indeed, the facilities have played the role as external factors in developing the Muslim identity. There are numbers of Islamic events which have been held inside the *musolla*. The role of *musolla* can be related to the role of *Masjid* (mosque) during the golden age of Islam in the fact the *masjid* played an important role as a place for

worship, administration, education and social activities (Al-Oadah, 1998: 79; Rukhaiyah, 2005).

7.3 RE

The RE subjects at both schools indicated that majority of the students agreed that the teaching and learning of the RE subjects at these schools have shaped their Muslim women identity. However, the number at NHCS is slightly higher than the MM. This is due to the UK's context, policy, belief, and culture. The UK is a non-Muslim country, thus, RE subjects have played an important role in the formation of Muslim women identity in the sense that they offer the learning of the substance of Islamic knowledge in a formal, structured and systematic way. Although the RE subjects are basically theoretical, nonetheless, they are aimed at practice. Tajul Ariffin (1997) and Khursid Ahmad (1979) describe the Islamic Education as spiritual and physical guidance based on the laws of Islam leading to the formation of the Muslim women identity according to Islamic criteria. Apart from the available Islamic curriculum, the teachers at MM and NHCS try to infuse the *Quran* and *hadith* into topics in the existing curriculum, as well as Muslims' historical contributions to science, geography, mathematics, and history, thus producing integrated Islamic and secular knowledge.

Throughout the interviews, focus groups and participant observation, this research indicated that majority of the students agreed that teaching and learning the RE subjects at these schools has given rise to two significant contributions in the formation of their identity. First, they make them realized the status, right and role of

women in Islam and, second, they have improved their attitude and identity as Muslims.

7.3.1 Realize the Status, Rights and Roles of Women in Islam

Most of the students agreed that the RE subjects at these schools have made them realize the status, rights, roles of women in Islam in which lead them to be a *Muslimah*.

The number of NHCS is higher than the MM because Muslim Pakistani women in Leeds in the past struggled to undo men's monopoly on religious understanding, to get back the rights that they are entitled to under Islam, and to break out of the cultural boundaries that have ensnared them. In the past, Muslim women were discriminated from education and majority of the traditionalists (from South Asia) viewed female education as challenging the notion of *izzat* and *sharam*⁷³ (Lewis, 1994; Haw, 1998, 2011; Jawad & Benn, 2003; Ansari, 2004; Din, 2017; Breen, 2018). Due to the generational change, civilization and modernization, Muslim parents become aware about the importance of education for their daughters. Thus, Shah (1998) perceives single-sex schooling to exist because of 'the nexus of socio-cultural and political manoeuvres bound up with colonialism and reinforced by the active and effective traditions within subcultures as well as the religious Islamic discourses' (see Haw, 1998: 164 - 165).

Moreover, the provision of facilities for Muslim women in Britain to pray and pursue an Islamic education has a notoriously bad history, with many mosques still having

⁷³ As I explained in Chapter One.

restrictions against women using them at all. Maqsood (2005) suggests that the lack of services for women in some mosques today is because they are seen as ‘prayer clubs for men’ that do not provide rooms for women to worship and learn Islam. Jawad strongly insists that ‘the worst deprivation of all was the denial of their [women’s] right to receive education’ (Benn, 1998: 30).

According to a case study by the Faith Matters organisation in 2010, only 100 out of 486 mosques across the United Kingdom meet 4 or 5 of the criteria required to qualify as excellent mosques. Faith Matters’ looked at five key areas that women wanted to see within mosques – separate prayer spaces for women; services and activities geared towards women; an *Imam* accessible to women; the inclusion of women in decision-making; and at least one woman holding an office on the mosque committees (Faith Matters, 2010). According to Brown (2008: 481), the effort to create a ‘women-friendly’ environment inside the mosque has been actively promoted by the British government since 2005 as a part of its ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ (PVE) strategy, but still few mosques have adequate space for women from the community to meet together, even for prayer or Islamic study.

Thus, through this RE subjects, students learn that the positions of women were highly valued and respected in early Islamic societies. Women were encouraged to earn knowledge and to be involved in the social and political sphere. Mawdudi (1974: 139) emphasizes that ‘so far as the acquisition of knowledge and cultural training is concerned, Islam does not allow any distinction between man and woman’.

7.3.2 Improve the Attitude and Identity

Both schools have agreed that the RE subjects have improved their attitude and identity. Importantly, the RE subjects are in tandem with the development of the Islamic identity to the students as well as in-line with the primary purpose of Islamic education – to produce a ‘good [wo]man’ and the ‘true Islamic [wo]man’ – ‘the *insan kamil*’ (true Islamic person). Therefore, they can give contribution to the *ummah* in the future.

Again, the number of the NHCS respondents who agreed to the statement is higher than the MM because of the NHCS’s context itself. The RE subjects do not teach about the identity formation *per se*, but how to maintain the Islamic culture and value especially for the NHCS’s students who live in a non- Muslim country. According to Haw (1998: 66; Din, 2017), parents are most concerned about the ‘inadequate Islamic education in the state system, the issue of how a minority maintains the integrity of its cultural identity’. These are major factors for Muslim parents in Leeds wanting an Islamic school for their children, especially regarding the issue of Islamic education, value and culture.

These NHCS students need to negotiate between religion and the host society, so that they can be a good Muslim and good citizen. The respondents were aware that Islam incorporates an ethical value-system, and that they can get into trouble if an Islamic education is not transmitted to them properly. From the data gathered, many of the students agreed that the RE subjects should be coherent between the values promoted in the *Quran* and those taught at school whilst providing stronger Islamic influences to them so that they live within the community in which they live. By doing this, they

have a framework based on religious traditions and find common values to which all can adhere.

Muslim girls generally want moderate Islamic education and they believe this will defend them against the immorality of society whilst also protect them from the threat of extremism. One of the '7/7' bombers was from Beeston in south Leeds. This bad reputation has become a major concern because it may influence children's behaviour. When asked about their solutions to this problem, a majority of these respondents said that Islamic education provides the best way to deal with this social problem, as well as with outside influences such as westernisation and secularisation.

The central role of Muslims in imparting appropriate Islamic knowledge and practices to their children has also frequently been at the centre of government policy and political debate (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). In 2006, John Reid (a former British Home Secretary) called upon Muslim parents to keep an eye on their children in order to protect them from being influenced by religious extremists and terrorist activity (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Breen, 2018). This sort of appeal has been opposed by many Muslim parents, who view it as displaying a form of prejudice and Islamophobia. However, it could be interpreted differently – as a call for parents to take precautions to protect their children from the threat within the Islamic religion, as well as from bad influences such as uncommon and/or un-Islamic values, norms and cultures.

Importantly, students in NHCS need to know how to negotiate between tradition and context, understand how to translate Islam and the *Quran* within their everyday lives in Britain without there being any contradictions. Similarly, Meijer (2009) argues that

the Islamic curriculum in Islamic schools should pay more attention to the practicality of the *Quran* and Islam in situational context – i.e. learning to distinguish between what is consistent with Islamic values and what is not. However, during an interview with Muslim educationalist, Mr. Akram Khan Cheema⁷⁴ suggested that the curriculum for all Muslim children should be embedded within seven aspects of culture: spiritual, academic, moral, cultural, social, emotional and physical. The curriculum at MM and NHCS can be viewed as representing a combination of Meijer's (2009) and Khan Cheema's approaches, and aims to produce young Muslims with Islamic identity.

Thus, MM and NHCS have emerged in response to the perception that religious knowledge is necessary for both organizing daily life and for preparing for life in the hereafter. Majority of the students believe that they live in this world temporarily, as a test by Allah, and aim for eternal life in the hereafter. It is commonly believed that robust knowledge and faith is required in order to face all of Allah's tests. Strong knowledge and faith are therefore required and MM and NHCS are seen as one of the appropriate channels for achieving this end.

7.4 Role Model

During my conversations with the students, a majority of them agreed that the best role model to follow and to inspire all Muslims is the Prophet Muhammad, as he was the best man, husband, leader, ruler, warrior and administrator. One of the MM students described the Prophet Muhammad as a walking, talking version of the *Quran*. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad's characterization and behaviour embodies the practical message of the *Quran*. As Allah says in the *Quran*, '*Indeed in the Messenger*

⁷⁴ An interview was conducted with Akram Khan Cheema at his house in Bingley, Bradford on 24th September 2013.

of Allah you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much' (Al- Ahzab:21)

Hence, under this section, I have divided it into three discussions, first; what are the qualities of these teachers to become role models, second; what are the impacts of role models to their identity and finally; what are their future contributions to the society after finishing their study?

7.4.1 The Qualities of aTeacher to become a Role Model

The data gathered indicate that they are 3 characteristics of role model. They are:

- 1) Show *Qudwah Hasanah*. Teachers give good example to the students physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually.
- 2) Knowledgeable. Teachers mastered the knowledge in various disciplines, and want to see them succeed.
- 3) Charismatic. Teachers have career. They are working Muslim women yet adhere to Islam. Teachers always practice positive reinforcement and build confidence to the students. The teachers dress in a professional way, covering the *aurah* as suggested by Islam.

7.4.1.1 Charismatic

Based on the above criteria, another surprising finding to emerge from the interviews were the points of number 3. Majority of students indicated that charismatic was their top priority in modeling.

Charismatic is a top criterion due to the contemporary society today as many women are involved in the public sphere and employment. A role model should be charismatic as it gives an example on how Muslim women should bring herself in the society. Nevertheless, in the past, Contractor (2012) described women's gradually declining role in the process of production and dissemination of knowledge and their marginalisation from social discourse. Thus, in order to bridge to span the gap between 'theory' and 'today experience', charismatic Muslim women should be role models to eliminate this 'theory'.

Both in Malaysia and the UK context, there are a significant growing number of employed, professional and educated Muslim women. Therefore, the charismatic teacher has inspired students to be like their role model. A typical answer in these case studies were that of Nabihah (Maktab Mahmud):

My teacher is a role model because she is educated. Even though she is a Muslim woman, she has a job. Very committed and always think about ummah.

Noura (NHCS):

She is educated and has inspired me to be like her. For me she is a perfect woman in the sense that she is educated, pious, kind and has a career.

In a modern contemporary society both in Malaysia and the UK, to find an Islamic, charismatic Muslim woman is challenging due to the modernisation, globalisation and secularisation. Muslim students nowadays must be exposed to exemplary behavior on which to fashion themselves. Presumably this would come from the parents in the first instance and then the teachers at school.

7.4.1.2 *Qudwah Hasanah*

Majority of the students from both schools insisted their role models give *qudwah hasanah*.

The NHCS is higher than the MM because in a non- Islamic society, to get a *qudwah hasanah* is challenging. Many of the students reported that they feel happy in the school because it is Islamic, they have good teachers as a role model and that they feel 'comfortable' because they all wear scarves and share a common religious and cultural background⁷⁵. As stated by Al- Afendi and Baloch (1980), teachers as role models need to provide students with an understanding of their role and obligations not only to the Muslims who reside around them but also towards the non-Muslims.

In the UK, an Islamic role model is difficult to find at state schools. Thus, NHCS is seen as a space for students to have numbers of Islamic role models. Islamic teachers play an essential role in the school especially in inculcating Islamic values and knowledge in the students. For Quick (2004:58), the Islamic teacher is honored as 'the living example of Islamic culture and the *murshid* (guide) to the thirsty young minds'. Throughout the interviews with respondents at both schools, all of them agreed that the role models show *qudwah hasanah* in the sense that it motivates them to be good, develop their spiritual and emotional needs.

The respondents perceive that role model as *qudwah hasanah* as being something that reinforces the Islamic education that they receive in the classroom with regards to ethics and morality. As supported by Rosnani Hashim (1998) Abdul Kabir (2008), an

⁷⁵ According to Halstead, (2005) differences in terms of religion, culture, background may affect the educational achievement of the students especially for Muslim children at state school. This is due to some children experience discrimination and Islamophobia..

Islamic school is assumed to have a role model in preparing the students to be better human beings and the teachers as the best models for them to emulate in their character, the models of reasoning and behavior which the teachers display in their actions in the classroom must be in a morally acceptable manner. The type of *Qudwah* the *Qurān* recommends is the one that is based on good and virtuous conduct which appeals to one's heart and mind (Rosnani Hashim, 1998).

7.4.1.3 Knowledgeable

Majority of the respondents agreed that in order to be a Muslim woman role model, she must have broad knowledge not only in Islam studies *per se*, but in other disciplines too.

The number of MM is higher than the NHCS because of the culture, status and prestige of MM. Indeed, MM has its own good reputation in academic achievement, students' *akhlak* and leadership and school's history and legacy. Thus, undoubtedly, majority of the respondents perceive one's knowledge as a benchmark to become a role model. Moreover, the MM students have been trained since its inception to have 'knowledge culture' in themselves. Consequently, until today, MM is one of the best Islamic schools in Kedah. The need to be knowledgeable Muslim women is important nowadays as Jawad and Benn (2003) encourage women (especially mothers) to become educated and to know the fundamental religious obligations so that this can be taught to their children. It is undeniable that parents are the central role models for children in the family institution.

7.4.2 The Impacts of Role Model to their Identity

Throughout the interviews under this section, majority of the respondents agreed that role models at school have impacted their behaviour to be a better and a more disciplined person.

7.4.2.1 Be a Better Person

Majority of the respondents agreed that their role models encouraged them to be a better person.

The number of respondents at NHCS is higher than the MM due to various factors. They are the school's profile, social and culture context and family background. Majority of NHCS students come from religious family as their family opted to send them in Islamic schools instead of the state school. This is contradicting to the status quo whereas most of the Muslim Pakistani family send their children to the state schools. The state schools in Leeds are free, have easy enrolment and are available in surplus areas. Thus, students who enrolled at NHCS is seen as Muslim girls who are committed to Islam and put efforts to be better Muslim women. Additionally, living in a non-Muslim country, Muslims in Leeds are trying to counter and remedy social or cultural influences that might undermine the children's religious and moral development.

At NHCS, teachers are seen by the parents as a person who can teach and influence their children in moulding Muslim women identity. As stated by Gilliat- Ray (2010: 132):

‘... the ways in which families aim to build and sustain religious identity, and the role of both formal and informal educational systems as part of this process’

I suggest that many Muslim mothers in Leeds are aware of the important influences of nurture and nature in their children’s upbringing especially living in a non- Muslim society. Rosnani Hashim (1997: 58) agrees that teachers as role models are not just professional workers but are also a *muaddib* who concerns themselves with instilling *adab* and *akhlak* in their students.

7.4.2.2 Discipline

Majority of the respondents agreed that their role models encouraged them to be more disciplined. The number of respondents at MM is higher than the NHCS because of the school’s reputation. In order to uphold the good name of MM, the Students’ Affairs Division of MM has designed a strict regulation to produce disciplined students (Dunham, 1984; Vakalisa & Jacobs, 2001; Dawo & Simatwa, 2010; Sureiman, 2010; Tikoko & Bomett, 2011; Gitome et al., 2013; Mussa, 2015). Importantly, there is a positive relationship between discipline and excellence. Students need to have self- discipline in order to be excellent students.

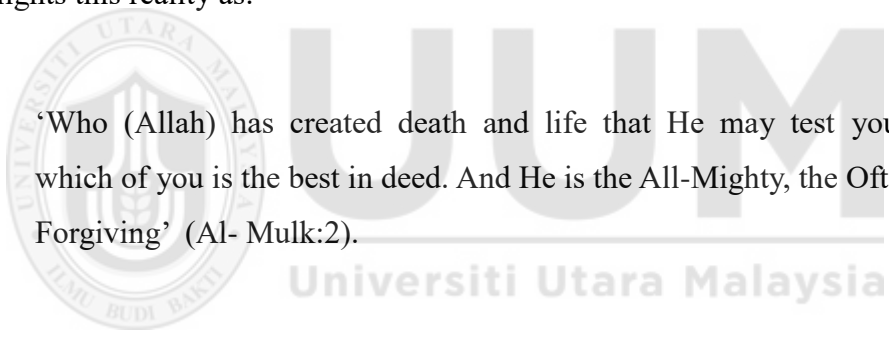
7.5 Type of Muslim Women Identity at Both Schools

These ethos, RE subjects and role models have produced students with Muslim identity. The criteria of Muslim identity that I found through this study are:

- i. Good *shaksiyah*
- ii. Discipline
- iii. Active

- iv. Brave
- v. Leadership skills
- vi. Knowledgeable
- vii. Educated

The emphasis upon the need to encourage students to have good *shaksiyah*, discipline, and leadership skills and be active, brave, knowledgeable, and educated is clearly viewed as making a positive contribution to the community, and to be producing good mothers for the next generation. In fact, living in a modern contemporary society, it is essential to prepare them with the above Muslim women identities. The Holy *Quran* highlights this reality as:



‘Who (Allah) has created death and life that He may test you which of you is the best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving’ (Al- Mulk:2).

In another verse, Allah says:

‘Verily! We have made that which is on earth as an adornment for it, in order that We may test them (mankind) as to which of them are best in deeds’ (Al- Kahf: 7).

These verses show that this life is full of test to make people become better. The development of children on right lines laid foundations to do best deeds in future life.

In an unstable economic situations dictate that it is becoming increasingly difficult to raise a family by depending only on husband. Thus, Muslim women can help their husband by getting a job. However, unskilled and uneducated women are exploited.

However, among conservatists such as Muhammad Karoila (1994) concluded that a woman may leave her home only on account of a *shari 'ah* necessity such as pilgrimage, visiting the ill or visiting her parents. This argument shares an incoherent understanding of the Islamic text and its relationship to the contemporary reality that human beings are part of (Latif, 2002).

In fact, the above criteria of Muslim women identities that I found through this study are inline with al- Qaradhawi in his book *'The Status of Women in Islam'* and Thanawi in his book *'Bihesti Zewar'* (Metcalf, 1997) and other fellow reformist *ulama'* wanted to make women knowledgeable, educated and stand against conservative opinion of the time⁷⁶. Maulana insists that education can enhance a girl's *izzat* of the family and 'central to that role is knowledge of her place in relation to other human beings and to Allah' (Metcalf, 1997: 26).

Muslim woman is just like a man: she has a mission in life, and so she is required to be as effective, active and social as her particular circumstances and capabilities allow, mixing with other women as much as she can and dealing with them in accordance with the worthy Islamic attitudes and behavior that distinguish her from other women.

The criteria of Muslim women identity at both schools such as good *sakhsiyah*, discipline, active, brave, leadership skills, knowledgeable and educated students have affected the students' inspirations and motivation to contribute to the Muslim

⁷⁶ The conservatists viewed that women should stay at home and fully adhere the *izzat* and *sharam*.

community in the future. The data gathered indicate that they are three favorite contributions that they wanted to do in the future. They are:

- 1.) Open free Islamic classes
- 2.) Do *dakwah*
- 3.) Establish Islamic organisations, funds or charities for Muslim community

The issue of students' contributions in the future has been raised in order to know whether the school's settings, RE subject and the role model have inspired them to give something out to the community in the future after they have successfully developed good Muslim women identity in themselves.

7.5.1 Open Free Islamic Classes

The number of respondents at MM is higher than the NHCS because of the economy factor in Malaysia. Malaysia is a developing country, hence, in terms of social economy, the Malaysians are still struggling in personal expenditure. Therefore, free Islamic classes would be beneficial for middle-class and rural area community. Even though the local mosques do frequently organise free talks, *tazkirah* and open classes inside the mosques, the Islamic classes meant by the respondents is more formal, exclusive and extensive such as *Quranic talaqi* class, *hajj* (pilgrimage) course, marriage course, Islamic motivation class and so on.

7.5.2 Do *Dakwah*

The Muslim woman who has been truly guided by the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* has a refined social personality of the highest degree, which qualifies her to undertake her duty of calling (*dakwah*) other women to Islam. Muslim women need to open their

hearts and minds to the guidance of this great religion which elevated the status of women at a remarkably early stage in their history. Even though the *dakwah* job is a men monopoly, women nowadays need to be actively involved in this arena too.

The number of respondents in NHCS is higher than the MM due to the demographic profile of the UK itself. The UK is a non- Muslim country, thus the *dakwah* works is needed to call the non- Muslims to Islam. Perhaps, the *dakwah* job can also be done inside the community itself as some of the Muslim Pakistani in Leeds still adhere to the un- Islamic Pakistani diasporic culture and tradition. Therefore, through this *dakwah* job can teach them to understand and know the real meaning of Islam, Islamic culture and values.

Generally, Muslim women both in Malaysia and the UK who understand the teachings of Islam should stand out, call out and demonstrate the true values of Islam and the practical application of those values by her attaining of those worthy attributes. The make-up of her distinct social character represents a huge store of those Islamic values, which can be seen in her social conduct and dealings with people. From these actions, the Muslim women may influence the non-Muslims and un-Islamic Muslims to Islam.

7.5.3 Establish Islamic Organisations, Funds or Charities for Muslim Community

The NHCS is higher than the MM due to the Muslim community in the UK as a sub-religion. Prior to this condition, the UK government has allocated not so much money on the Muslim needs as Muslims only minority group in the UK. Muslim community

have to put their own initiatives, energy and money in order to fulfil the needs of Muslim community. Therefore, the support from Islamic organisations, funds or charities is needed for Muslim community. Through this mechanism as well may unite the whole Muslim community as they are only a minority group in the UK. The theory of fusion and fission in society is proved from what have happened in the UK nowadays in the sense that the minority group is much united within the majority of the host society.

It is often argued that it is difficult to be a good Muslim while living in a non-Muslim country, although Muslims also say that many of their basic religious freedoms are sometimes better protected in a country like Britain than in some parts of the Islamic world⁷⁷. Moreover, numerous initiatives have been undertaken to provide Islamic education in Leeds and many other parts of the United Kingdom by Muslim organisations, communities and parents.

The above contributions have proved that the rights, roles, and responsibilities of women are evenly balanced with those of men. Each plays a unique role to mutually uphold social morality and societal balance. As Allah says in the Quran:

- 1) A woman is also under the same ethical obligations as men in respect of her social duties for society.

"Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him will we give a new life that is good and

⁷⁷ For instance, the British government's permission to build mosques and wear the *hijab* in public although prohibitions on these religious phenomena do exist in Switzerland (for minarets) and in France (for the *hijab*).

pure, and we will bestow on such their reward according to their actions (An-Nahl, 16:97).

- 2) She must play an active role in her community by enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.

" The believers, men and women, are "Awliya," (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another, they enjoin (on the people) Al-Ma`ruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do); and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar(i.e. polytheism and disbelief of all kinds, and all that Islam has forbidden) (At-Taubah, 9:71)

- 3) All the good contributions will be rewarded by Allah.

And who so does good works, whether male or female, and he (or she) is a believer, such will enter Paradise and they will not be wronged the dint in a date-stone. (Al-Nisa, 4:124)

Whosoever does right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life, and We shall pay them recompense according to the best of what they do. (16:97).

In both these verses, apart from the rewards given by Allah Almighty, I can argue Allah has encourage both men and women to have an active involvement in the society.

Due to the findings of this Islamic women identity at this school, I argue that the formation of Muslim identity is different in every context. As mentioned by Knott and

Khokher (1993) and Gilliat-Ray (2010: xii), the identity formation is an ongoing process and it changes and adapts the influencing factor around that process. This is consistent with what said by the Prophet Muhammad that:

‘Teach your children! They are created to face era with the times
(the future) which is not equal to your era’ (Narrated by Bukhari)

In the context of a Muslim country like Malaysia, the process might be easier compared to in the non- Muslim country such as the UK. This is due to the features of the UK society itself such as the policy, culture, religion and beliefs system which is different from Malaysia in several aspects.

In conclusion, it is often argued by the Western literatures that Muslim women were depressed, the victims of discrimination and patriarchy especially in education, politics, economy and society. Ironically, today, many Muslim women are active and educated, and they contextualize the *Quran* into their life, leading to a new identity of Muslim women. Many traditionalists are now also rejecting the ideology that women should stay at home, and the notion that education can harm their *izzat* and *sharam*. In fact, this perception is no longer justifiable in a modern society as it contravenes the widely held interpretations of Islam.

The redefining of Muslim women identity occurred as a result of the complex processes of globalisation, modernisation and the emergence of Muslim women activists and intellectuals. In terms of Islamic education, one revivalist influenced strategy has been to separate Islamic teachings from patriarchal cultural norms, thus differentiating between culture and religion. It enables Muslim women to engage with and adapt to the contemporary (non) Muslim societies that they live in whilst

retaining their Muslim women identities. To achieve this end, they need supports from both the Muslim community and the state – through Muslim organizations and leadership.

7.6 The differences Between Kedah and Leeds in Shaping Muslim Women

Identity at Schools.

Overall, I found a number of similarities and differences between the two institutions studied. The similarities are as follow:

1. Both MM and NHCS's ethos, RE subjects and teachers lead the students to have good Muslim women identity. The criteria of Muslim women identity found in this research are good *shaksiyah*, self- discipline, active, brave, tolerance and respect, leadership skills, knowledgeable and educated.
2. Muslim women of all backgrounds, social classes and status can have similar attitudes towards the importance of Islamic education.
3. Many Muslim women in Kedah and Leeds were active in gaining education and pursuing knowledge about Islam. Even though their public personas sometimes make these women appear docile and passive, education is driving them to push traditional social and cultural boundaries.
4. Local Muslim institutions, leaders and society have put some efforts to fulfill the needs of these women. Their efforts can be seen through the provision of Islamic education for women at MM and NHCS. The demand from Muslim community has led the local Muslim institutions and leaders to create such provision.

5. All these institutions have the same general aims and objectives in teaching Islamic education to Muslim girls, which are to help them become good Muslims, good citizens, good mothers for future generations as well as a woman who can give contributions to the *ummah*.

Meanwhile, the differences between the two institutions are that:

1. Apart from to have good *shaksiyah*, each of these institutions has its own preference in designing the rules and regulations of the school. MM is more focused on the academic achievement. On the other hand, the NHCS emphasized more on tolerance, negotiation and integration with the wider British society. This is because the Muslim community in the UK is the minority group and they have to obey and negotiate with the host society policy, culture, and value. Much of the literature on Islamic education and Islamic school and Muslim women identity agrees that Muslim institutions have the potential to provide a good impact on their students' identity if they manage the school appropriately in terms of resources and curricula (Osler et al., 1995; Meijer, 2009).
2. The NHCS respondents faced more challenges in the formation of identity as they lived in a non-Muslim country with different policy, culture and value. Building on this, what follows is my own investigation of the perceptions of respondents at MM and NHCS regarding the importance of Islamic school setting and Muslim women identity. My interviews and observation at MM and NHCS show the concerns that the respondents have with the Ministry of Education, Malaysia and British state education system to the present day, a point reinforced elsewhere in the thesis. Particularly, the respondents are most

concerned about the role and values of Islamic education in the state system, the issue of how to develop and sustain an Islamic identity, maintain the integrity of its cultural identity, and the role of Islamic schools to reinforce the teaching of Islamic education and its values.

3. The NHCS respondents are more ambitious and keen in practicing Islam such as they still cover the *aurah*, wear *hijab* and even get formal education at Islamic school which contradicts to the status quo of the local Muslim community in Leeds. The push factor that might trigger them to be more conscious about Islam is because of majority of NHCS students come from a religious family background. Their parents have strong Islamic belief despite living in a non- Muslim country. By highlighting the concept of education in Islam, it is no doubt that education at every level in Malaysia should be revised and strengthened. Despite focusing on content and method, the correct understanding on the concept of knowledge and the teaching and learning approach should be improved (Wan Mohd Nor, 2003; Nik Rosila, 2013). The Malaysian educational system should focus on the understanding and internalisation rather than the exam-oriented based system.

In the current Malaysian curriculum, knowledge has been integrated in the 16 values of the integrated curriculum for both primary and secondary school. They are the fundamental virtue (*ummahat al-akhlaq*), i.e., wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice (Al-Miskawayh, 1968). Then, from the fundamental virtue, emerged other virtues, such as compassion, self-reliance, moderation, respect, love, freedom, cleanliness, honesty, diligence, co-operation, rationality, public spiritedness, and good morals as existed in the current

Malaysian curriculum (Wan Mohd Nor, 2003; Nik Rosila, 2013). However, these virtues were not explained comprehensively especially from philosophical point of view (Sidek, 2009). Thus, in order to enhance moral consciousness among students, their moral reasoning should be stimulated in teaching and learning, such as through moral reasoning activities (Pushphavalli, 2009). Generally, the above discussion reveals Malaysian educational system is basically impersonal and learning is just a medium to enter university and have a job rather than a vocation for developing knowledge or moral understanding. This perception contradicts with Islamic teachings that regard learning as spiritual, emotional and intellectual sources.

To sum up, both these similarities and these differences contribute to the betterment of students' identity and Muslim educational institutions in Kedah and Leeds. Indeed, these similarities and differences were influenced by the government policy, culture and values of the contexts. However, I did not set out to investigate the policy, culture and values of the contexts, but this would be an interesting future project.

7.7 Conclusion

The issues of the curriculum, the environment, and a lack of Islamic role models were among the key issues that the respondents felt were lacking or problematic about national school education, and which somehow Muslim parents saw as detrimental to their children's Muslim identities. Thus, the existence of MM and NHCS is one of the ways to fulfil the needs of Muslim girls' in the formation of Muslim women identity.

The Islamic schools tend to reinforce the cultural, linguistic and religious identities of students, and this is further supported by the content of RE subject as well as the teachers as role models. All these components in many Islamic schools have been integrated with the values and culture of Islam. Through this discussion in this chapter, the research has shown how these mechanisms are working together in order to produce a student with good Muslim identity.

In summary, as an insider in terms of religion, it felt to me like MM and NHCS were a perfect school for every Muslim girl to learn, as they provide both Islamic curriculum and national curriculum. As an outsider and a researcher, I saw how the available Islamic education in MM and NHCS in the form of the combination of school, parents and government desire was interdependent, with all of these supporting aspects of children's education. However, the MM and NHCS have played a significant role in the shaping of Muslim girl's identity to become a good Muslim woman.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter of the study. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of Islamic schools' setting such as the ethos, RE subjects and teachers as role models in the formation of Muslim women identity and how different it is in comparison to Leeds. Two case studies have been done at two different contexts; Muslim and a non-Muslim country- Malaysia and the UK. This chapter presents the summary of the chapters, conclusion of research, findings for research objectives, implication of the study, research recommendations for Islamic schools, recommendations for Islamic curriculum planner, recommendation for government and recommendations for further research.

8.2 Summary of the Chapters

Chapter One of my thesis described the introduction, background and overviews of the research including the conceptual and theoretical framework. I also described briefly the literatures on Islamic schools' settings and Muslim women identity both in Malaysia and the UK.

Chapter Two illustrated the literature reviews from both countries; Malaysia and the United Kingdom

Chapter Three outlined the research methodology and methodological issues arising from my case studies. I considered how my researcher status as both an insider and an

outsider provided advantages and disadvantages. I explored each aspect of my status and considered how they could have affected my findings. For example, when I explained my family background to teachers, and our longstanding connection to Islamic education, we began to build a rapport and they often provided me with rich data. Therefore, establishing a relationship of trust with some of the target interviewees was important before engaging in the fieldwork. The data were acquired through interviews with three constituencies – governors, teachers and students. Focusing on these different groups provided a variety of different perspectives and opinions, and this enabled me to examine the similarities and differences between them.

Chapter Four contextualized Islamic education in Malaysia and the UK beginning with the development of Islamic education in both countries, also the difficulties faced by Muslim children in the past. I explained the history of MM and NHCS and I differentiated, in general terms, between MM and the NHCS and other Muslim educational institutions that exist for women in the past distinguishing their ethos and environment, curricula and pedagogy. Most notably, the curricula at both MM and NHCS are more extensive than from what the women have had in the past, which simply focus on reading the *Quran* and *tajweed*. The pedagogies also differ in terms of encouraging critical engagement; the environment differs, too, in terms of being less traditional, while still maintaining an Islamic ethos.

Chapter Five set out some of the key issues concerning Muslim women's identity and education. This includes the issues of modernity, and the process of re-shaping gender discrimination and the attitudes of traditionalists. As a result of the complex processes

of globalisation, modernisation and the emergence of Muslim women activists and intellectuals, Muslim women more generally have developed Islamic identity and reclaimed their right to an education. In the past, girls were more generally excluded in pursuing education, hence has impacted the formation of Muslim identity in themselves.

Chapters Six presented the case study of Maktab Mahmud (MM) and New Horizon Community School (NHCS). MM is one of the best Islamic schools in Kedah. This MM has developed good reputations in terms of students' *shaksiyah* and academic achievement. I considered the teaching at this school as 'a new form' of Islamic education which differs from the other Islamic schools in Kedah. It is because, the MM established its own board to design the syllabuses and textbooks. Interestingly, the syllabuses are equivalent to that of and recognised by the MOE. On the other hand, in NHCS, I found women's attitudes and identity to have changed from the traditional view and the status quo of the local community, with them actively encouraging themselves to pursue higher education. This changing attitude reflects modernization in the sense that women nowadays recognize the rights of women in education. Perhaps it may reflect the attitude of what were middle class British Muslim parents, rather than British Muslim society more generally.

Chapter Seven presented my fieldwork analysis and discussion. Generally, I found that both schools played a constructive role in the shaping of Muslim identity to the students. For both MM and NHCS, apart from their curriculum – which is a combination of both the national and Islamic – the success of these schools can be attributed to they being a female-dominated space, which, as many scholars argue,

provides the best place for girls to explore their potential, given the absence of sexual harassment and the existence of a rewarding atmosphere (Haw, 1998, 2011; Jawad & Benn, 2003; Shah, 2004; Halstead, 2005). The school's ethos, RE subjects and teachers as role models can help in the identity formation to the students. Interestingly, in this research I found the outcome of identity that the respondents and the schools would achieve through the designation of the schools' setting; ethos, RE subjects and teachers as role models.

8.3 Conclusion of the Research

It can be concluded that majority of the students at MM and NHCS were satisfied with the school's ethos and environment, RE subject and role model at their schools. Despite a few weaknesses in terms of supports from the state (NHCS) and social media (both MM and NHCS), they believed that the school's rules and regulations, school's co-curricular and Islamic activities, school's culture, school's environment and facilities, RE subjects and teachers as role models gave positive and significant contributions to the development of Muslim women identity. The findings of the research found that there are similarities and differences in the shaping of Muslim women identity to the students at school. The similarities and differences happened due to the different policy, culture and belief of the context; Malaysia and Britain. However, in any Muslim context; majority or minority, all Muslim educational institutions have the same general aims and objectives of education for Muslim girls, which are to help them become good Muslims, good citizens and good mothers for future generations.

8.4 Findings for Research Objectives

- 1) **To explore the role of Islamic schools' ethos, religious education subjects and teachers as role models in the formation of Muslim women identity.**

The ethos, RE subjects and teachers have shaped Muslim students' identity through various strategies. For example, the ethos has shaped the students' identity through the school's rules and regulations, school's co-curricular activities, school's culture and school's environment and facilities. All of these components have been implemented in both schools, however, the way of its implementation depended on the policy, culture and belief of the school's context. For example, under school's rules and regulations, apart from the good *shaksiyah*, the MM is more concerned on academic achievement. On the other hand, in NHCS, the concern is more on tolerant and respect, integration and negotiation with the wider British society.

For the RE subjects, both schools have their own syllabus and curriculum which was monitored by the respective local authority. In MM for example, the school used KBD which has five main strands of *Usul al- Din*, *al- Syariah*, *al- Lughah al- Arabiah al- Mu'asirah*, *al- Manahij al-Ulum al- Islamiyyah* and *al- Adab wa al- Balaghah* which are infused into the curriculum. Meanwhile, NHCS does not follow a standard syllabus as there were no standardized syllabus for all Islamic schools in the UK. It depends on the schools to decide what the teachers want to teach. Basically, all the Islamic schools will focus on four main strands of *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Aqidah* and *Sirah* which are infused into the curriculum. These four subjects represent fundamental

knowledge that every Muslim is expected to learn. Thus, the school believes that these subjects can influence students' identity.

Moreover, both schools also believe that the teachers as role models can affect students' identity. All respondents agreed that there are three main criteria in order to be a role model. They are charismatic, knowledgeable and *qudwah hasanah*. These main criteria that the role models owned have inspired and motivated the students to be like the role models (teachers). The teachers are able to be role models because of their own initiatives as well as supports from the schools, for example, both schools organised *usrah* (MM) and study- circles (NHCS) at schools. The need for the guideline and support for the teachers is important for them to be good role models and being inspired by the students and also as a turning point for them to further develop their career potential (Martinez-lopez, 2010; Mason, 2010; Rafisah, 2009; Rimm-Kaufman, 2004; Rorlinda, 2009; Steele, 2010; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007; Nik Mustafa & Zuraidah, 2015). The guideline is the bridge between knowledge and action as proposed by Al Ghazali (Nik Mustafa & Zuraidah, 2015). During that program teachers were taught about Islam and how to be a *muaddib*, *muallim*, *murshid* and *murabbi*.

Overall, I argue that the current provision of Islamic education for Muslim women is very different now from that which the Muslim women in the past received. As changes have occurred in society, for example in terms of education, socialization, role models and access to the new media, this has impacted on Muslim girls' and women's Islamic education as well.

2) To investigate the type of Muslim women identity at both schools

These ethos, RE subjects and role models have produced students with Muslim identity. The criteria of Muslim identity that I found through this study are:

- 1) Good *shaksiyah*
- 2) Discipline
- 3) Active
- 4) Brave
- 5) Leadership skills
- 6) Knowledgeable
- 7) Educated

3) To compare the differences between Kedah and Leeds in shaping Muslim women identity at schools.

The differences between the two institutions occurred were due to several factors.

They are:

1. School's preference in designing the school's philosophy, vision and mission.
2. The school's context such as Malaysia and the UK.
3. Students' internalisation and understanding Islam

8.5 Implications of the Study

This study focuses on Islamic schools and Muslim Identity in Kedah and Leeds. However, the findings are valuable for all Islamic schools generally as the findings have implications that could be beneficial to all Islamic schools, governors, teachers, curriculum planner, ministry of education and Muslim educational institutions.

The findings of the study have increased awareness about the limitation and constraints faced by Muslim women in a challenging, modern contemporary society. This sense of awareness will offer opportunities and new avenues for research and poses the challenge of findings ways to overcome these limitations and constraints in the future.

It revealed the role of Islamic schools in the shaping of Muslim identity to the girl Muslim students in a challenging society. The Islamic schools' community are aware of the need to have Islamic ethos and environment, good Islamic curriculum and teachers inside the schools. Indeed, these three components have given a remarkable impact to the students' identity.

The findings of this study also revealed the importance of Muslim schools in the shaping of Muslim students' identity. Moreover, living in a modern contemporary society like Malaysia and the UK, and also the push and pull factors in the development of the identity has become crucial nowadays.

8.6 Research Recommendations for Islamic Schools

There is a need to improve the Islamic schools' ethos and environments by organizing a lot of Islamic activities that can provide opportunities for students to engage with the local community. These activities will not be beneficial for the students *per se*, but for the local community and reputation of the Islamic schools, as many schools' activities in general nowadays are more focusing on activities inside the schools' premises only.

There is a necessity for Islamic schools to recruit a pious, Islamic, knowledgeable teacher. It includes personality, academic background and passion. These criteria are important as the findings of the research shows that the teachers as role models gave impact to the students' identity.

The Islamic schools should emphasize on the character building rather than the academic purposes. The emphasis on Islam in bringing up children is not only about education *per se*, but also about developing values and practices, imbuing manners, morality, discipline, good attitudes and behaviours, as well as life routines. Thus, in a challenging arena, the schools should be aware about the current problem of the society and the factors that may influence students' identity.

The schools should cooperate with the parents to ensure that there is a continuous process of the development of Muslim identity to the students at schools and home. They bring back what they learnt at schools to home and *vice versa*. Together with the Islamic schools, the family or home is the main institution involved in the religious nurture and critically important in providing effective education for children.

There is a need for Muslim communities and institutions to establish a lot more Islamic school. The establishment of Islamic schools is seen as an educational institution that can fulfill the needs of Muslim students.

There is a need for Muslim communities and institutions to establish a lot more Muslim girls' schools. Many still view single-sex schools to be important for ensuring that girls receive education in a secure environment. According to Halstead (2005; Cf. Haw 1998), there are two strong grounds for single-sex schooling for Muslim girls: firstly, they afford more freedom for them to develop individual potential, balanced understanding, and confidence when they are in an environment where there is less danger of sexual harassment; and secondly the presence of boys in the classroom may negatively affect the educational achievement of girls.

8.7 Recommendations for Islamic Curriculum Planner

There is a necessity to revise the Islamic curriculum for Muslim girls' schools. It will be beneficial for girls to know about women' matters in Islam such as *fiqh mar'ah*. At MM and NHCS, these women matter and *fiqh mar'ah* were only discussed during *usrah* or study circle. However, it will be useful if this subject is included in the curriculum. Thus, it will make girls' schools different and special form other schools. In fact, as a Muslim woman it is an obligation to know about *fiqh mar'ah* as it is part of *ibadah*.

Furthermore, for the subject of *Sirah*, the curriculum planner should include the history of Muslim women such as Aishah R.A, Asiah R.A, Khadijah R.A and so on and their contributions to Islam. Thus, it will inspire the girls to be like them. These

aspirations must be translated into actions and strategies that require a shift in actions, policies and implementations of the education system.

8.8 Recommendations for Government

The government has to increase financial assistance to Islamic schools, as the study already described that majority of the Islamic schools faced financial problem. This problem will lead to the lack of facility, the low salary of the teachers and lack of Islamic activities and programs at schools.

There is a need for government to revise the educational assistance they provided. The curriculum planners and schools' governors must participate in this assistance and provide more efficient suggestions to the government to solve Islamic schools' problems.

The government should organize more conferences, courses and trainings to the teachers so that the Islamic schools' teachers are updated with the current issues in education. For example, the pedagogy, the teaching and learning issues, and the current problem and demand of the society. The conference is an important platform for discussions and knowledge-sharing by the participants to develop new ideas and practices that could be adapted for students at schools.

8.9 Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study have made the researcher realized about the possibility of conducting more research in the future. It is advised that an in-depth study should be conducted in other regions elsewhere, for example in the UK, the study can be

focused on the low population of the Muslim community. On the other hand, in Malaysia, the study can also be conducted in a big and modern city like Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Johore. Future studies have to concentrate on the Islamic education aspects and go in-depth into the Islamic identity formation. Future studies should be able to offer specific details of the process of maintaining and preserving the Muslim identity despite the Muslim community facing more challenges in big cities.

The findings of this study are based entirely upon the study conducted in Kedah and Leeds and may not be applicable to other areas on account of contextual problems. This study should be carried out nationwide so as to include the entire sample from other areas. In future works, I encourage the replication of this study in other regional areas in which cross-regional similarities and differences could be studied. In addition, future research may offer some insights of improvement and ideas to all involved Muslim authorities to create new solutions for Islamic schools, Muslim society and community.

The limitations among Islamic schools in the shaping of Muslim identity to the students are the culture, belief and policy of the contexts; Malaysia and the UK. This will provide new areas for other researchers in the future to study about these limitations. These limitations also reveal the influences of Muslim identity formation among students at schools.

8.10 Summary

This chapter presents the conclusion of the research and includes recommendations of the study and recommendations for the future researches. The conclusion of this study is to gather all the information collected from the interviews, observations, focus groups and documents about Islamic school and identity according to the objectives of the research. The recommendations of the study cover all aspects involved in Islamic schools and Muslim identity. Future research should investigate this area in more detail.



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APPENDICES

Appendix i: Islamic Schools in Kedah

SENARAI SEKOLAH-SEKOLAH AGAMA YANG BERDAFTAR DENGAN JABATAN HAL EHWAL AGAMA ISLAM NEGERI KEDAH

BIL.	SEKOLAH MENENGAH AGAMA RAKYAT (SMAR)	TEL	FAX
1	SMA AI-Maahad Addini, Persiaran Sultan Abdul Hamid, 05050 Alor Setar, Kedah Darul Aman.	7724432	7729101
2	SMA Nahdhah Hasanah, Melele, KM. 24, Bt.21, Jln. Kodiang, 06100 Kodiang, Kedah Darul Aman	9251926	9251926
3	Maktab Pengajian Islam Kedah, No.25, Bt.2, KM. 3, Jln.Changloon, 06100 Kodiang, Kedah Darul Aman.	9252211	9255233
4	SMA Attoyyibah, Kg. Pdg. Halban, 06010 Changloon , Kedah Darul Aman.	9243097	9243097
5	SMA Al-Khairiah, Jalan Empangan, Pedu, 06300 Kuala Nerang, Kedah Darul Aman. 0194059607	7866721	7869582
6	SMI Darul Ulum, KM.23, Jalan Kuala Nerang, 06300 Pokok Sena Kedah	7412680	
7	SMA Assiddiqiah Al-Islamiah, Kg.Padang Kerasak, Mukim Tekai,06350 Naka, Kedah Darul Aman.	7852703	7852703
8	SMA Al-Islah, Seberang Pendang, 06700 Pendang, Kedah Darul Aman.	7590988	7594813
9	Maahad Al-Imam Al-Syafie, Km.9, Jalan Sungai Tiang, Sawa Kecil, 06700 Pendang		
10	SMA At-Taufiqiah Al-Khairiah Al-Halimiah, Bt.16, Padang Lumat, 06910 Yan, Kedah Darul Aman.	7481357	7481358
11	SMA Daris, Sungai Jagung, 08000 Kuala Muda, Kedah Darul Aman.	019-5468095	019-4207106
12	Akademi Haji Abdullah Suboh, Jalan Kota Kuala Muda, Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman	4376308	4376308
13	SMA Yayasan Khairiah, Kpg. Pisang, 09200 Kupang, Kedah Darul Aman.	4766934	4766934
14	SMA Diniyah Islamiah, Pekan Kupang, 09200 Kupang, Kedah Darul Aman.	4766067	4766067
15	SMA Tarbiah Diniyah, Jalan Pegawai, 09000 Kulim, Kedah Darul Aman.	4905490	4905490
16	SMA Ihsaniah, Jangkang, 09700 Karang, Kulim, Kedah Darul Aman.	4056050	4059646
17	SMA Al-Baqiatussolihat, Kg. Ranggut, Mukim Pdg. Mat Sirat, 07100 Langkawi	9533344	9533345

BIL.	SEKOLAH RENDAH AGAMA RAKYAT (SRAR)	TEL	FAX
1	SRI UMMI, 4028-4030, Taman Rakyat, Jln.Sultanah, 05350 A.Setar	7328751	7332144
2	SRI Alor Setar, Km. 5, Jln. Datuk Kumbar, 05300 Alor Setar	7339063	7358146
3	SRI. DARUL AMAN KM.3, Lebuhraya Sultan Abd. Halim, 05400 A.Setar	7721913	7717363

4	SRI Al-Azhar, Pulau Nyior, 06000 Jitra, Kedah Darul Aman.	9291758	9293744
5	SRI At-Toyyibah, Kg. Pdg. Halban 06010 Changlun, Jitra	9243097	9243097
6	SRI Islah, Komplek Sekolah Islam Islah, Hadapan Taman Selesa, Seberang Pendang, 06700 Pendang	7593087	7592512
7	SRI Daris, Sungai Jagong, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah	4221606	4217766
8	Sekolah Rendah Islam Sungai Petani, Lot 10-15, Bgn. Zakat, Bakar Arang, 08000 Sg.Petani	4225222	4225222
9	SRI Al-Islah, Pokok Asam, Jln. Pinang Tunggal, Sg.Petani 0134884871	4386866	4387032
10	SRI An-Naim, Desa Murni, Pekan Lama, 09300 Kuala Ketil, Kedah Darul Aman	4161075	h/p 0195437912
11	SRI Al-Hikam , Taman Wang, Sungai Petani,	4231097	
12	SRI Darul Hijrah, Mukim Siong, Baling. 0194737096	4725502	4701418
13	Sek. Tahfiz Sains An-Najihin, 1447, Jalan Bukit Awi, 09000 Kulim, Kedah Darul Aman.	4900458	h/p 0195644624
14	SRI Nurul Hidayah, Lot 157-184, Lorong Putra E, Pusat Niaga Putra, Kelang Lama, 09000 Kulim.	4906580	4906580

BIL.	SEKOLAH MENENGAH AGAMA BANTUAN KERAJAAN (SABK)	TEL	FAX
1	SMA Nurul Islam, Ayer Hitam, 06100, Kedah Darul Aman.	7940686	7943568
2	SMA Al-Hidayah Al-Islamiah, Alor Biak, Bt. 10, Sg. Korok, Changlih, 06150 Ayer Hitam, Kedah Darul Aman	7945961	7942743
3	SMA Ihya Ul-Ulum Diniyah, Km.12, Simpang Empat, 06650 Alor Setar, Kedah Darul Aman	7641269	7641269
4	SMA Darussaadah, Titi Besi 06200 Kepala Batas, Alor Setar, Kedah Darul Aman.	7143661	7141064
5	SMA Makarumul Akhlak, Langgar 06500 Alor Star, Kedah Darul Aman.	7876193	7876193
6	SMA An- Nahdhah, Bukit Besar, Kota Sarang Semut, 06800 Yan, Kedah Darul Aman.	7691055	7692341
7	SMA Assaadah Diniyah, Sg. Limau Dalam, 06910 Yan, Kedah Darul Aman.	7694233	7694233
8	SMA Fauzi, 06900 Yan, Kedah Darul Aman.4475491	4655486	4655486
9	SMA Irsyadiah, Ampang Jeneri, 08320 Sik 0194048157	4620726	4620726
10	SMA Pekan Gurun, 08300 Gurun, Kedah Darul Aman.	4686941	4682967
11	SMA Sg. Petani, Bedong, 08100 Kedah Darul Aman.	4582094	4501122
12	SMA Annajah, Titi Gantung, Pulai 09100 Baling, Kedah Darul Aman	4721046	4721044
13	SMA Islahiah, Kg. Dingin, 09000 Kulim, Kedah Darul Aman	4041986	4041986
14	SMA Daril Iktisam, Batu 28 1/4, Jalan Pdg. Sanai, 06300 Kuala Nerang, Kedah Darul Aman	7864875	7864157
15	SMA Maahad Tahfiz Abidin, Kg. Charok Manggis, Pokok Tai, 06720 Pendang, Kedah Darul Aman	h/p0134357898	4619696
BIL.	SEKOLAH RENDAH ASAMA BANTUAN KERAJAAN (SABK)	TEL	FAX
1	Akademi Haji Abdullah Suboh, Jalan Kota Kuala Muda, Sungai Petani Keda Darul Aman	4374270	4376308

2	SRI Al-Ihsaniah, Tikam Batu, Sungai Petani, 0195744244	4388990	4388990
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BIL.	SEKOLAH MENENGAH AGAMA PERSENDIRIAN	TEL	FAX
1	SMA Al-Azhar, Jln Muda Kuari, Mukim Gelong, 06000 Jitra, Kedah	9291758	9293744
2	SMA Al-Islah, Lot 292 Pokok Asam, Jalan Pinang Tunggal, 08000 Sg. Petani	4386866	4387032



UUM
 Universiti Utara Malaysia

Appendix ii: Permission Letter to Do Research

Rukhaiyah Binti Haji Abd Wahab
School of Languages, Civilisation and Philosophy
College of Arts and Sciences
UUM, 06010 Sintok
Kedah Darul Aman

Dear Principal,

I am a postgraduate research student at the Universiti Utara Malaysia, interested in the teaching of Islam in Malaysia and in the UK schools and how this relates to questions of Muslim students' identity, Islamic values and the importance of Islamic education for Muslim children.

My topic is '**ISLAMIC SCHOOLS AND MUSLIM WOMEN IDENTITY: CASE STUDIES OF MUSLIM GIRLS' SCHOOLS IN KEDAH AND LEEDS**' and I am working on how Islamic education being deliver in a Muslim and a non- Muslim country. The main aim of this study is to explore how Islamic schools shaped students' identity. This research includes the issues around Muslim women's education, modernity and contemporary society and efforts have Islamic schools made to shape and preserve the Islamic identity in a modern contemporary society.

As part of the preparation for my research I would like to make a visit to your school soon for a day or half day so that I can begin to understand and experience the place of education about Islam in the school's life. I am interested in the theory behind the curriculum as well as the practical perspectives of the head-teacher and governors, as well as the teachers and students.

If you are willing to help me, I would like to interview you for about one to one and a quarter hours. I have some questions in mind but there would also be plenty of time for you to put across your views. I would like to tape record the interviews if possible. However, I could write notes instead if you would prefer. If possible,

I'd also like to meet and interview with **(2) TWO** teachers and **(30) THIRTY** students.

All information given will be confidential, and if any material is quoted in writing, names will be changed to keep the information anonymous. I will only discuss the interviews with my supervisor at UUM, who would also be committed to confidentiality. If you feel, having read this, that you would be happy for me to visit or if you want to ask more about my work before agreeing to take part, I would be happy to answer any questions you have. I can be contacted by telephone, email or post as directed at the beginning of my correspondence.

Jazakallahu Khairan kathira and Wassalam



[Rukhaiyah Binti Haji Abd Wahab]

Tel No: 01110745261

Email: hubba_1980@yahoo.com

Appendix iii: Information sheet

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Project Title: ISLAMIC SCHOOLS AND MUSLIM WOMEN IDENTITY: CASE STUDIES OF MUSLIM GIRLS' SCHOOLS IN KEDAH AND LEEDS

Researcher: Rukhaiyah Binti Haji Abd Wahab, PhD Student (hubba_1980@yahoo.com)

1. Purpose of the Research Study

You are invited to be a participant for a research study of Islamic schools and Muslim women identity in Malaysia and in the UK. This is a part of my work on my PhD thesis in the School of Languages, Civilisation and Philosophy, College of Arts and Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). The main aim of this study is to explore how Islamic schools shaped students' identity. This research includes the issues around Muslim women's education, modernity and contemporary society and efforts have Islamic schools made to shape and preserve the Islamic identity in a modern contemporary society.

2. Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is both randomly selected and voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without penalty and without affecting your relationship to the university.

3. What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher who already prepared some questions (both open and close questions) on Islamic education, Muslim women identity and Muslim women experiences and perceptions in the shaping of Muslim identity in an approximately 30 - 60 minute individual interview session.

4. Will I be recorded, and how will the recorder media be used?

The audio recordings of your activities made during the interview will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures after transcribing them into text, and all quotations will be anonymised. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. After submitting the thesis, all voice recording will be destroyed.

5. Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

Risks: there are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study other than those encountered in normal daily life.

Benefits: Your participation will help further research on Islamic school, Islamic education, Islam, Muslim identity in general. As an individual, you will have the opportunity to talk with other people about your own reactions to, ideas about, and perspectives on Islamic schools and Muslim identity experience.

6. Confidentiality

I ask you to please keep confidential the information discussed during our focus group session. Even though I will know who took part in the interview, no identifying information or names will be used in my final thesis/presentation/etc. The interview will be audio taped, and the non-verbal communication also will be observed. I am the only one who will view or hear the tapes for transcription purposes. All tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study. Please be aware, however, that direct quotes from the transcripts may be used, though they will not be linked to your real name in any way.

7. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results will be analyzed and published as PhD thesis, and then it would be basic or beneficial for further research about Islamic schools and Muslim identity.

Contacts and Questions

Researcher : Rukhaiyah Binti Haji Abd Wahab, PhD Student

Student I.D : 900626

Email : hubba_1980@yahoo.com

Tel No : 01110745261

You are encouraged to contact me if you have any questions.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.



Appendix iv: Informed Consent

Title of Research Project: **ISLAMIC SCHOOLS AND MUSLIM WOMEN IDENTITY: CASE STUDIES OF MUSLIM GIRLS' SCHOOLS IN KEDAH AND LEEDS**

Name of Researcher: Rukhaiyah Binti Haji Abd Wahab

Initial the box if you agree with the statement to the left

1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet/letter <i>[delete as applicable]</i> dated <i>[insert date]</i> explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I understand that the participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. <i>Insert contact number here of lead researcher/member of research team (as appropriate).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential <i>[only if true]</i> . I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the principal investigator should my contact details change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I agree to give my permission for the researcher to record audio voices during the interview and use accordingly as mentioned in the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Respondent
(or legal representative)

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent
(if different from lead researcher)

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Rukhaiyah Binti Haji Abd Wahab

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Appendix v: Informed Consent to Parents

Title of Research Project **ISLAMIC SCHOOLS AND MUSLIM WOMEN IDENTITY: CASE STUDIES OF MUSLIM GIRLS' SCHOOLS IN KEDAH AND LEEDS**

Name of Researcher: Rukhaiyah Binti Haji Abd Wahab

Initial the box if you agree with the statement to the left

1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet/letter <i>[delete as applicable]</i> dated <i>[insert date]</i> explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I understand that the participation is voluntary and that my child is free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should he/ she not wish to answer any particular question or questions, he/she is free to decline. <i>Insert contact number here of lead researcher/member of research team (as appropriate).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I understand that his / her responses will be kept strictly confidential <i>[only if true]</i> . I give permission for members of the research team to have access to his/ her anonymised responses. I understand that his/ her name will not be linked with the research materials, and he/ she will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I agree for the data collected from him / her to be used in future research	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I agree my child to take part in the above research project and will inform the principal investigator should his/ her contact details change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I agree to give my permission for the researcher to record audio voices during the interview and use accordingly as mentioned in the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of parents
(or legal representative)

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent
(if different from lead researcher)

Date

Signature

Lead researcher

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Appendix vi: Interview Questions

A. ETHOS

PRINCIPAL AND GOVERNOR

Part A: Demography

Name:

Designation:

Part B:

i. School's philosophy, objective, vision and mission

1. What is the school's philosophy, objectives, vision, and mission?
2. How does this school (ethos, teachers, and RE subject) play its role to build Islamic *Shaksiyah* amongst its students?
3. In terms of the school's philosophy, objectives, vision, and mission, what is the difference between this school and other schools such as the national schools?
4. What is this school's priority in building its students' *Shaksiyah*?

ii. Rules (Uniform, manners, etc)

1. What is the form of rules employed by this school to build students' *Shaksiyah*?
2. To what extent have the school's rules been effective in building students' *Shaksiyah*?
3. What are the challenges faced by the school to implement the rules?
4. How does the school handle students' disciplinary problems?

iii. Activities

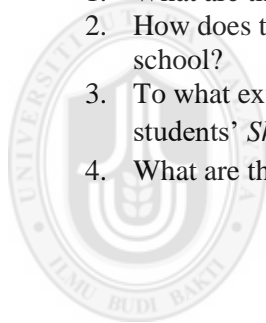
1. Does the school provide activities which encourage the building of Islamic *Shaksiyah* amongst its students?
2. Does the school provide activities related to community service amongst its students?
3. To what extent have all the activities been effective in building students' *Shaksiyah*?
4. What are the challenges faced by the school in implementing Islamic co-curricular activities?

iv. Culture of Excellence

1. What are the measures taken by the school to inculcate the culture of excellence in the school?
2. What are the measures taken to sustain excellence in this school?
3. Besides academic qualifications, what are other requirements for prospective teachers in this school?
4. Is being religiously observant one of the criteria of teachers' recruitment in this school?
5. Besides academic qualifications, what are other requirements for prospective students in this school ?
6. Is being religiously observant one of the criteria of students' recruitment in this school?
7. How does the school ensure that the students are not influenced by external negative factors? (example: peer pressure, social media and society)
8. Who are the school alumni amongst the girls who have remarkable achievements?

v. Cheerfulness and Facilities

1. What are the characteristics of Islamic environment in this school?
2. How does the school physically create good/Islamic environment in the school?
3. To what extent has the Islamic environment been effective in building students' *Shaksiyah*?
4. What are the challenges faced by the school in creating Islamic environment?



Universiti Utara Malaysia

ETHOS

STUDENT

Part A: Demography

1. **Name:**
2. **Age:**
3. **Form/Year:**
4. **Ambition:**
5. **Hobi:**
6. **Father's occupation:**
7. **Mother's occupation:**

Part B:

i. Rules

1. What are the forms of rules employed by the school to build students' *Shaksiyah*?
2. Do the school rules help you become a good student?
3. Do you find it difficult to comply with the school's rules?
4. What is the most challenging school's rules to comply with?

ii. Activities

1. Does the school provide activities which encourage the building of Islamic *Shaksiyah* amongst its students?
2. In your opinion, do the co-curricular activities help you to be an active and a good student? Which club? Why?
3. Are you interested in taking part in any community service activities organized by this school?
4. In your opinion, what is the school's activity which helps you the most in making you a student who has good *Shaksiyah* and caliber?

iii. Culture of Excellence

1. What is your ambition? Why?
2. How do you ensure that your ambition will be realized?
3. Does your family support your ambition?
4. Do you agree with the statement that says women should stay at home after completing school? Why?

5. Who is your idol amongst Muslim women? Why?
6. Who is a female alumnus which makes the school proud?
7. What are the things that make you feel proud about the school?
8. What makes this school different from other schools?
9. How to ensure that you are not influenced by external negative factors (example: peer pressure, social media and society)
10. Does this school affect your life and your future?

iv. Cheerfulness and Facilities

1. What does it mean by Islamic environment?
2. What are the characteristics of Islamic environment in this school?
3. In your opinion, does this school have a good environment? Why?
4. Do you think the school's cheerfulness and facilities help you become a female student with good *Shaksiyah*?



B) RE SUBJECT

TEACHER

1. Do you think the Pendidikan Islam subject (PI) is important? Why?
2. Is it important to introduce the PI subject in schools? Why ?
3. Is the current PI subject taught in schools enough to build Islamic identity in students?
4. What are the focus of teachers to ensure the students become great persons with good *Shaksiyah* like Khadijah RA and Aisyah RA?
5. What are the challenges in implementing the teaching and learning of the PI subject? (eg; students, parents, society)?
6. Are you dealing with students' disciplinary issues?
7. Is there any relationship between the PI subject and the building of Islamic identity? Why?
8. What are the student's attitude towards the PI subject?
9. How do you perceive the achievement of the school's objective?
10. Does your school's curriculum contribute to the holistic development of the students?
11. Do you have any opinion on how to improve the implementation of the PI subject in the future?

STUDENT

1. Do you think the Pendidikan Islam (PI) subject is important? Why?
2. Do you like the PI subject? What is your most favourite topic?
3. Is the current PI subject taught in schools enough to build Islamic identity in students?
4. To what extent does the PI subject influence your daiy life?
5. Is there any relationship between the PI subject and the building of Islamic identity? Why?
6. Does the PI subject help you in handling moral and social problems?
7. How does the PI subject change your attitude and identity?
8. Do you practice at home what you learn in schools?

C. ROLE MODEL

TEACHER

Part A: Demography

Name:

Designation:

Part B:

i. Quality

1. What does it mean by Role Model?
2. What are the qualities of a Role Model?
3. What should you do if you want to become a Role model for others?
4. Must a teacher become a Role Model for his/her students? Why and how?
5. What is your opinion on teachers' role as 5M (Murabbi, Muaddib, Mudarris, Murshid dan Muallim)

ii. Effort

1. Does this school provide you with enough support for you to become a Role Model?
2. How can teaching the PI subject influence you to become a Role Model?
3. What are your efforts in becoming a Role Model?
4. What would be your contributions to the society in the future?

iii. Challenge

1. What are the challenges faced by a teacher to become a Role Model?

ROLE MODEL

STUDENT

Part A: Demography

1. **Name:**
2. **Age:**
3. **Form/Year:**
4. **Ambition:**
5. **Hobbies:**
6. **Father's Occupation:**
7. **Mother's Occupation:**

Part B:

i. **Quality**

1. What does it mean by Role Model?
2. What are the qualities of a Role Model?
3. Who is your idol amongst female Muslims? Why? Does she influence your life?
4. Who is this school's alumnus who has become a female Muslim Role Model? What are her contributions?

ii. **Effort**

1. What should you do to become an example to others?
2. What would be your contributions to the society in the future?
3. Does the PI subject influence your ambition?
4. What is your ambition? Do you have a female Role Model who has succeeded in your dream career?

iii. **Challenge**

1. How can a Role Model influence your daily life and future career?
2. What are the challenges to follow in the footsteps of your role model?

FOCUS GROUP (STUDENT)

PART A: SCHOOL CULTURE

Rules

1. Do the school rules help you to become a good student?
2. Do you find it difficult to comply with the school rules?
3. Which is the most challenging school rules to comply with?

Activities

1. Does the school provide activities which encourage the building of Islamic *Shaksiyah* amongst its students?
2. In your opinion, do the co-curricular activities help you to be an active and a good student? Which club? Why?
3. Are you interested in taking part in any community service activities organized by this school?
4. In your opinion, what is the school's activity which helps you the most in making you a student who has good *Shaksiyah* and caliber?

Culture of Excellence

1. What is your ambition? Why?
2. How do you ensure that your ambition will be realized?
3. Does your family support your ambition? In what forms?
4. Do you agree with the statement that says women should stay at home after completing school? Why?
5. Who is your idol amongst Muslim women? Why?
6. Who is a female alumnus who makes the school proud?
7. What are the things that make you feel proud about the school?
8. What makes this school different from other schools?
9. How to ensure that you are not influenced by external negative factors (example: peer pressure, social media and society)
10. Does this school affect your life and your future?

Cheerfulness and Facilities

1. What does it mean by Islamic environment?
2. What are the characteristics of Islamic environment in this school?
3. In your opinion, does this school have a good environment? Why?
4. Do you think the school's cheerfulness and facilities help you become a female student with good *Shaksiyah*?

PART B: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUBJECTS

Syllabus

1. Do you think the Pendidikan Islam (PI) subject is important? Why?
2. Do you like religion subject? What is your favourite?
3. Do you think the PI subject taught in school can help build a student's *Shaksiyah*?
4. To what extent does the PI subject influence your daily life?
5. To what extent does the PI subject change your attitude and *Shaksiyah*?
6. Do you practice at home what you learn in school? Could you provide some examples?
7. How does the PI subject motivate you in your future career?

T&L

1. Do you like the PI subject?
2. What are the challenges you face when learning the PI subject?
3. What is your suggestion to make the PI subject more interesting?

PART C: ROLE MODEL

Quality

1. What does it mean by Role Model?
2. What are the qualities one must have to become a Role Model?

Effort

1. What should you do to become an example to others?
2. What would be your contributions to the society in the future?

3. Does the PI subject influence your ambition?
4. What is your ambition? Do you have a female Role Model who has succeeded in your dream career?

Challenges

1. How can a Role Model influence your daily life and future career?
2. What are the challenges to follow in the footsteps of your role model?



Appendix vii: List of Respondents and Informants

Maktab Mahmud

Lembaga	Principal	RE Teachers	Students	Informants
Ust. Shafie Bin Ismail, BCK	Ustazah Zaiton Binti Ismail, BCK	1. Rahimah ⁷⁸ 2. Jamilah ⁷⁹	1. Syahirah 2. Zakirah 3. Ibtisam 4. Adibah 5. Farah 6. Izni 7. Nabihah 8. Salsabila 9. Ulya 10. Husna 11. Hidni 12. Fatihah 13. Qistina 14. Iwana 15. Basyirah 16. Ainina 17. Shuhada 18. Auni 19. Syamira 20. Syamail 21. Nurin 22. Bahirah 23. Najihah 24. Saïdah 25. Rina 26. Tahlia 27. Liza	1. Karimah ⁸⁰ 2. Aminah ⁸¹ 3. Diana ⁸² 4. Nadia ⁸³

⁷⁸ RE teacher, 42 years old

⁷⁹ RE teacher, 36 years old

⁸⁰ HEP (Hal Ehwal Pelajar, Student Affairs) teacher, 36 years old

⁸¹ RE teacher, 42 years old

⁸² Arabic teacher, 31 years old

⁸³ Science teacher, 47 years old

New Horizon Community School

Governor	Principal	RE Teachers	Students	Informants
Dr. Razak Raj	Ms. Hena	Aisha Sakinah	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fareeda 2. Ulfah 3. Huda 4. Shabnam 5. Noura 6. Saikah 7. Amna 8. Lisa 9. Khadeja 10. Naheed 11. Lubna 12. Ilham 13. Almas 14. Fatima 15. Hafsa 16. Hajar 17. Rashda 18. Raifa 19. Salma 20. Lana 21. Haley 22. Jannah 23. Tania 24. Meera 25. Lily 26. Nada 27. Shasha 28. Khaleesa 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. Akram Khan Cheema⁸⁴ 2. Dr. Ataullah Siddiqui 3. Dr. Abdullah Sahin⁸⁵ 4. Nuha⁸⁶ 5. The head teacher of Noor Ul Islam Primary School in Leyton, London, the winner of the AMS-UK School of the Year Award 2010. 6. The head teacher of Al-Noor Independent School in Ilford, London, the winner of the AMS-UK Citizenship/Community Cohesion Award 2010. 7. Nusrat Mohammed in Blackburn, the winner of the AMS-U Teacher of the Year Award 2010.

⁸⁴ who was awarded an Order of British Empire (OBE) by the Queen and received the Muslim News Award for excellence in education in 2002. He has worked as a teacher in both primary and secondary schools, with over thirty years experience in the 'British educational system and has been instrumental in pushing back barriers facing Muslim teachers' (Islamic Voice, 2003). He rose to become a chief inspector of schools in Bradford and is an educational consultant for the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS). He has also been instrumental in developing schemes to enable trainee teachers to bring Islam to the classroom.

⁸⁵ Dr Ataullah Siddiqui and Dr Abdullah Sahin from Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) in Leicester. They are both Muslim scholars who work on Muslim issues and Islamic education in Britain.

⁸⁶ An Arabic Teacher and a PhD student from Egypt, 35 Years Old.