

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In the past, from generation to generation, many civilisations have viewed women as inferior to men. Unfortunately, women are still a decade-long subject of controversy until-now because the same mindset of looking down on women still persists in society. In addition, women have been described as poor, less able to determine their own life or fate and often victimised by others' self-interests. Women are also portrayed in various forms of oppression and discrimination in that they are considered a source of danger, temptation, social damage, chaos or evil. In addition, on one hand, they are praised as mothers but on the other, as imperfect human beings.

Historically, the pre-Islamic (*Jāhiliyya*) era was a dark period where women were given no rights, statuses or positions (Hasan, 2013). Women had no dignity; they were seen as sex objects and were usually treated as the lower class in society. Baby girls were killed, while women were forced to get married or sold as slaves. Humiliation also abounded if the wife gave birth to a baby girl because the society at the time believed that a girl brought disaster and misfortune to the society. As a result, all newborn girls would be killed instantly. The position of women at that time was very low; most were discriminated against. For example, *zihār* was punished in the form of *talāq*, where it became a trend for the husband to divorce their wives when they were no longer

in love with them. Apart from that, men also engaged in immoral acts such as marrying their father's wives (stepmothers) after their father died (Nur Aisah, 2018).

However, the status and position of women improved and was elevated by the coming of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH did a marvelous job in removing the immoral acts. Islam started honouring women with rights and responsibilities as guided by the divine revelation. As is stated in a Qur'ānic verse, women have the right to be fully recognised as human beings similar to men. They have the rights to live decently, the right to ownership and inheritance, the right to give an opinion and express emotion, the right to educate and the right to raise one's quality in the sight of Allah. The Prophetic tradition also support women's rights by encouraging men to be kind and treat women with goodness. During the Prophet's time, there were many examples of women who were given equal position to that of men, and even sometimes a better position. Women participated in battles, were involved in pledges and the judiciary. They narrated the Ḥadīths of the Prophet and were involved in farming, business, and manufacturing to find a guarantee for *halal* sustenance. In fact, women were also experts in medicine such as Syifā binti 'Abdullah who was the main healer in the case of *namlah* disease that occurred at the Prophet's time (Mohd Nazim et al., 2012).

The situation changed after the death of Prophet Muhammad PBUH and the division of gender roles became obvious particularly after the golden age of Islam. The concept of 'gender' began to be used to explain social construction regarding 'masculinity' and 'femininity' between men and women. Gender also focused on a hierarchical division between women and men in both social institutions and practices. The ideological, customary, cultural, religious and environmental factors that were in the process of socialisation affected the women's thinking capacity and therefore

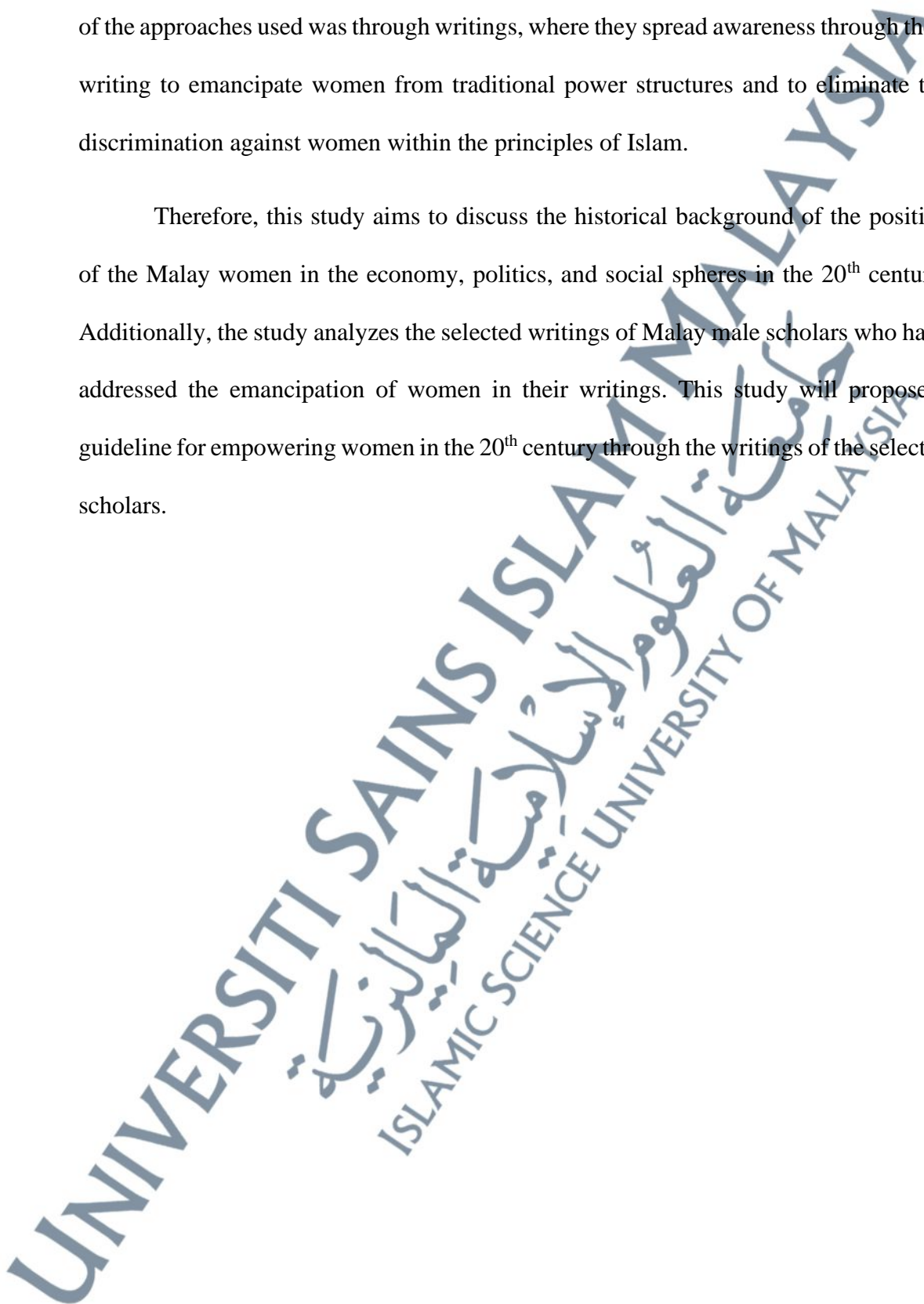
influenced their gender roles and positions in society (Mohamad Rahimi et al., 2017). The Islamic gender stream agrees with what is outlined by Islam and responds to the culture of the community who lives in modern times but their thoughts of women are like those of the age of ignorance (*Jahiliyāh*) period (Nur Amira et al., 2010). This phenomenon is triggered by the increasing indifference in the way the world reacts to religious teachings and spirituality, which has caused the people to face various complex problems of a large scale, and resulting in, one of the main victims being women.

Women are being given unequal treatment around the world, notwithstanding in Malaya especially before in the 19th century. The Malay community believed that women were better suited to staying at home and managing household chores. Moreover, women's movement and inclination towards socialization were restricted, particularly in the political sphere; the society was concerned that if their women were exposed to contemporary events, they might lose their oriental values. Besides, Malay parents were more likely to send their sons to school rather than their daughters. This was because they believed that the son would be the family leader and would shoulder significant obligations, and the sons also contributed much more to the family's economic well-being. In fact, mothers were more concerned with losing a household manager if they gave their daughters away.

The scenarios above triggered strength and enthusiasm in defending women's rights. In the mid-twentieth century, some circumstances and the emergence of groups prompted the Malay community to recognise the equal rights to women and the need for women to participate in society because they realized that women play an important role in country's success. The Muslim Malay scholars were one of the movements that

influenced women to break free from the Malay community's restrictive mentality. One of the approaches used was through writings, where they spread awareness through their writing to emancipate women from traditional power structures and to eliminate the discrimination against women within the principles of Islam.

Therefore, this study aims to discuss the historical background of the position of the Malay women in the economy, politics, and social spheres in the 20th century. Additionally, the study analyzes the selected writings of Malay male scholars who have addressed the emancipation of women in their writings. This study will propose a guideline for empowering women in the 20th century through the writings of the selected scholars.



1.2 Problem Statement

Women are frequently portrayed as an oppressed group in both Western and Eastern cultures, in Abrahamic Religions, whether Jewish, Christian, or Islam, and even in other cultural religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism (Arvind Sharma, 2017). According to Mahani Musa (2010), this scenario results from women's historical marginalisation in society and culture. In ancient civilizations and primitive communities, women were oppressed and mistreated without compassion (Jasni, 2006). For example, in Sumerian and Greek civilization, women were viewed as men's property (Mohd et al., 2012). Indian culture involves burning wives alongside their husbands (Coburn, 2015) and pre-Islamic Arab societies, particularly Bani Asad and Bani Tamim, buried their daughters alive (Muhibbin, 2011) in addition to the portrayal of women as inheritable property (Hasri, 2018).

Besides, women's issues are frequently discussed in society, particularly since the rise of feminists and movements that demand justice and gender equality. However, regarding gender, it discussed men and women, but women are mostly the subject of conversation. This situation is caused by women's *mysterium fascinosum*, which is frequently misunderstood and poorly understood (Mohd Anuar, 2010; Nur Saadah, 2020).

Furthermore, there have been many views stating that Islam discriminates against women and oppresses women as well as troubles women (Mahfud et al., 2017). According to Nikki R. (2007), Muslim women are frequently characterized as victims of patriarchal society, oppressed because of their motherly responsibilities, separated from society because of their hijabs, and denied justice under Islam (John L., 2010) in

aspects of marriage, divorce and inheritance. The illustration argues that Islam is a gender-oppressive religion.

Other than that, the allegations are made against Islam based on its religious texts namely the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, but the worst allegations are based on a misinterpretation of Ḥadīth, it is because the Ḥadīth has received more criticism and it was claimed as not divine and its source came from a person who was chosen as the Messenger of God. For example, the position of the Ḥadīth has been debated as allowing discrimination against women either directly or indirectly. This accusation contributes to the view that women in Islam are oppressed and Islam itself is a religion that promotes the patriarchal nature of the Muslim community (Nur Saadah, 2019).

Furthermore, the issue concerning women were also becoming more intense in the yellow book (*kitab kuning*), especially in the 20th century. For example, Martin van Bruinessen (1993) argue that different local cultures might influence the writing. Another issue raised was that male scholars dominated the authorship of these religious books. Riffat Hassan (1991) and Fatima Mernissi (1991) also discussed a similar issue, and both criticized male scholars for discriminating against women vis-à-vis religious texts from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

Moreover, these problems were discussed in society with the depth and serious intentions even in Malaya. However, efforts to write about women's issues in society have been done much by social experts and anthropologists (Hassan, 2017). The study of women is somewhat marginalized due to several factors. Among those factors is the tradition of writing that is more focused on the political aspects, prominence and war where the subject was to men. If there was even writing about women, it exists as an addition to the main historical writing supported by men (Mahani Musa, 2005). This

situation leads to the existence of an ideology or thinking about patriarchy, a system of society that is dominated and held by men (Abd Rahim, 2012). Some parties discriminate against women and the system of patriarch where men are the head of the family still exists in the Malay society (Hidayati, 2018).

Besides, in line with this understanding, the emergence of scholars in Malaya also has been dominated by men. In the past, women were seen as 'the silent' especially in religion and culture. Malay women were even positioned as wives and mothers charged with domestic responsibilities. As the result, men dominated the mastery of Islamic knowledge from generation to generation and almost all yellow book (*kitab kuning*) that are the source of Islamic knowledge in Malaya have been written by male scholars (Martin, 2018). However, there is no denying that some important female figures in Malaya contributed to the education arena and the struggle for independence (Fatimah, 2017). But it is found that the contribution of women to the interpretation of religious texts is minuscule compared to that of men.

In addition, based on the researcher's observation, it is significant to highlight that there were very few studies conducted on the Malay male scholars who published *Jawi* manuscripts particularly in the 20th century with the concern in advocating women issues and any matters regarding emancipation and empowerment of women. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyse the perception of these scholars and their idea as well as their interpretations towards the religious texts i.e. the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth that emphasized on women's issues.

1.3 Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the historical background of Malay women's position in the 20th century?
2. What are the Malay writings existed in the 20th century that concern on women issues?
3. How the religious texts concerning women that mainly related to the emancipation of women have been interpreted by the Malay male scholars?
4. What is the guideline for the emancipation of women within the Malay context?

1.4 Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To discuss the historical background of Malay women's position in the 20th century.
2. To discover the existence of the Malay writings in the 20th century that concern on women issues.
3. To analyse the religious texts concerning women which mainly related to the emancipation of women that have been interpreted by the Malay male scholars.
4. To propose the guideline for the emancipation of women within the Malay context that is relevant for all generations.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This present study is significant to be conducted for several reasons. First, such a study acknowledges the historical background regarding Malay women's position and women's issues especially the emancipation of women. The study will also give importance to challenges facing Malay women in the 20th century, such as those related to education, women's roles and positions, and their contributions to the time period in terms of politics, economics, and social aspects. In general, there were many historical writings that portrayed traditional Malay women as the property and they were not given any rights to determine their own lives (Noor Arba'iyah, 2020). Thus, this study will highlight women's issues especially the emancipation of women which covers the process, strategy and myriad efforts by women who have been striving to liberate themselves from the authority and control of men and traditional power structures as well as to secure equal rights for themselves based on Islamic law (Aisyah, 2012).

Second, this study is crucial for discovering the contributions of male scholars particularly from a socio-religious aspect and how they addressed women's issues. The majority of Islamic scholarship was conquered by male scholars back then, including in the Malay world. These men have highly influential and special positions in the society. This study found that there are numbers of Malay scholars in the 20th century which have significantly contribution in writings, but not all of them discussed about women's issues specifically. Therefore, this study will examine Malay male scholars who discussed about women's issue in their writing at that time.

Third, this study is crucial for future researchers because it provides a guideline in empowering Malay women based on the Malay writings of the 20th century that is relevant for all generations. The empowerment of women is targeted to Malay Muslim

women, however, the guideline provided is universal and can be referred to by women from other races and religions. If the researchers were to publish their book on women's issues, this study can be used as a reference and guideline.

1.6 Limitation of the Research

The limitation of the methodology used in this research is that it could have a limited result. This is because this study analyses selected writings which were published in the 20th century. This limitation determines the main focus of the study as below:

First, this study limits the focus on several Malay scholars who published their works between the 1900 to the 1960. They are Aḥmad bin Ya'qūb (1891-1959), the author of *Kitab Adab Perempuan*, Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī (1867-1934), the author of *Kitab Alam Perempuan*, Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān (1876-1950), the author of *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*, Haji Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar bin Aminuddin bin Abdul Karim (1854-1932), the author of *Tafsir Nur al-Iḥsan*, and Mohamed Idris Abdul Raof al-Marbawi (1896-1989) the author of *Baḥr al-Madhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*. These scholars were selected due to the content of their writings that discussed women's issues from many aspects of life.

Second, this study focuses on religious texts which include both the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth which have been used as a major reference in the writings of the selected Malay scholars. It aims to discover how the Malay scholars interpreted these Qur'ānic verses and Ḥadīths of the Prophet particularly those concerning women issues, for many of them have been interpreted differently with different approaches.

Third, the study will only focus on one main issue from the scholars' writings especially the one related to the emancipation of women. Thus, this study will analyse the interpretation of religious texts by selected Malay male scholars with a focus on the emancipation of women from the Malay context, in addition to applying it based on the Islamic perspective.

1.7 Literature Review

Reviewing the related literature is important to form a cohesive and coherent argument in finding a theory, policy, or methodological gap in the studied area. Therefore, the literary texts pertaining to this study from sources such as books, journals, articles, conference proceedings and the theses of contemporary and classic scholars were reviewed and discussed. The topics in this study are related to religious texts concerning women, their issues in the 20th century, Malay writings, and those written by male scholars. In the end, a conclusion will be made to summarise each topic.

1.7.1 Religious Texts Concerning Women

Generally, all religious texts have different ways of dealing with women's issues. For example, in Christianity, women are degraded and were looked down upon at some point in the early days of St. Paul but this practice began to erode as a result of the wave of Feminism that took place in the mid of 19th century (Mohammad, 2013). On the other hand, Hasiholan (2009) concluded that Hinduism believed that women have the same rights and obligations as men in terms of religious practice, because all human beings are equal in the sight of God, as stated in Bhagavad Gita 6. 47. However, there is a concept of 'Never Swatantra' which means that she never has a right on

herself, for instance, in terms of marriage, women are demanded to perform their duties to their husbands (as a servant). Therefore, women's rights in marriage are often neglected (Purnomo, 2009). In Veda, women have been described as objects (Fadhilah, 2015).

Islam has been accused of carrying the concept of male superiority over women. For example, the Qur'an mentioned that in terms of inheritance, men will get more than women. Besides, there are many claims that the contents of so and so Hadith are misogynistic and therefore demeaning to women (Nur Saadah, 2019). The Qur'an and Hadith are both regarded as the main legal sources and references for Muslims, therefore, these two religious texts have received many negative accusations and perceptions particularly regarding women's issues.

In fact, the Qur'an is not to blame for its contents as it was humans who interpreted them as egalitarian when it comes to the issues of equality between men and women. For example, Muslim scholars' debate in Surah Al-Nisā (4:34) and Feminists have misused it in a negative way. Dr. Laleh Bakhtiar, a lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago translates the word '*idrib*' as avoidance. On the other hand, Prof Dr. Syeikh Wahbah Mustafa al-Zuhaili translated the word to mean 'beat'. Dr. Laleh argues that the word 'beat' justifies the abuse of women while the interpretation of avoidance is gentler. Furthermore, another Arabic Professor, Siham Serry suggested that the word be translated as 'reject' (Zarina, 2012).

According to Sayyid Quṭb in his book, *Fi Zilal il Qur'an*, he mentioned the beating of women was not encouraged in any society. This act is permitted as a last resort only and must be used in accordance with the *Shari'ah*. Therefore, the scholars put a condition when it comes to beating the wife; 1) it does not cause wounds or

fractures (or damage to internal organs); 2) it is not continuous; 3) it does not hit one place only repeatedly; 4) it does not hit any part of the face or genitals; 5) and no hard objects, such as rattan, wood, iron or pans are to be used. Prof Dr. Syeikh Wahbah Musttafa al-Zuhaili stated in his *Tafsir al-Munir* that ‘beating’ is the last way to advise the wife and should be followed after all possible avenues have been exhausted. He warns against suddenly hitting the wife. All these processes take a long time, not just a day.

In another example, some have interpreted a few verses of the Qur’ān to discriminate against women such as on issues related to polygamy (4: 3), inheritance (4: 12), disobedience (*nusyuz*) (4: 34), legal matters (2: 282), and divorce (65: 1). In the matter of the superiority of men over women, many have misunderstood the verse about ‘*qawwamah*’. The interpretation of the word ‘*Qawwamun*’ as a saviour or manager is inaccurate (Abdulah, 2014), even if the sentence is interpreted as a determination of men over women’s affairs, it is also considered not a guarantee, nor is it consistent with Islamic education (Al-Hibri, 1982).

Besides that, some Ḥadīth has also been the centre of some arguments due to its reliability which only came from a Prophet Muhammad PBUH who is a man, rather than God. For instance, in the 20th century, Guillaume was among the first who criticised the Ḥadīth concerning women from negative perspectives. He also in supported towards the idea of Goldziher to reject the Ḥadīth altogether. In Guillaume’s book, *The Traditions of Islam*, he chose five Ḥadīths concerning women; woman as a source of discord; woman as a bad omen; women leaders will never prosper; woman leaders will never prosper; women have defects in intelligence and religion; and a disobedient wife will be cursed. He claimed that there Ḥadīths were fabricated to reflect the political and

religious tendencies of different groups, and only a few of the Ḥadīths belong to the authorities to whom they were attributed.

Tuksal (2014) also mentioned some of these Ḥadīths in her research, among them include female deficiency in religion and also contains the accusation that women “lead men astray”, women are mentioned in the same breath as donkeys and dogs; such as one which says that if a woman, donkey, or dog passes in front of a person who is performing a ritual prayer, their prayer will be invalidated because women are inauspicious.

These Ḥadīths were labelled as anti-women or advocating misogynistic traditions. According to Nur Saadah & Dahlan (2017), ‘anti-women’ also known as ‘woman demeaning’ and ‘woman-unfriendly’ statements which have been described by Juynboll (1996) in his *isnad* critical methods of Ḥadīths, referring to the number of Ḥadīths that he interpreted as anti-women. Images of women presented in the Ḥadīth literature have led to negative interpretations, which have been applied in socio-historical contexts, and thus influenced by diverse geographic locations and customs.

However, Barlas (2002) has raised the question of why the small number of so-called misogynous Ḥadīths, compared to the number of positive narrations on women, has gained so much attention, highlighting that the big controversy is due to the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of Muslims regarding these Ḥadīths. According to her, among the positive Ḥadīths include those: “that emphasise women’s full humanity; counsel husbands to deal kindly and justly with their wives; confirm the rights of women to acquire knowledge; elevate the mother of over fathers; proclaim that women will be in heaven ahead even of the Prophet; record women’s attendance at prayers in the mosque during the Prophet’s lifetime, including an incident where a girl

played in front of him as he led the prayer; affirm that many women (including women from the Prophet's family), were unveiled in the later years of Islam; and record that the Prophet accepted the evidence of one woman over that of a man.”

1.7.2. Women Issues in the 20th Century

At the beginning of the 20th century, Malay women were deemed poor by their community and that their roles should be confined only to biological and social functions (Hambur & Nurhayati, 2019). At that time, women were secluded from public activities, were not given the right to education and were forced to marry by their parent. Simultaneously, some women were also not interested in change because traditionally only men are considered to be the provider while women would only focus on taking care of the children, managing the household and making sure food and clothing are taken care of. In addition, societies at that time thought that women did not need to have perfect education because women were only regarded as housewives (Khairudin Aljunied, 2013). Society's thinking at the time was very damaging to women, the fact was that only education was a way to free them from the practice of marginalisation and subordination (Ruhana, 2017).

Nevertheless, the situation in Malay's society was also supported by the British when they occupied Malaya, which placed more priority on building schools because men are considered the main economic provider and the major contributor to the economy. This case was evident from the existence of more schools for boys rather than girls. For example, by 1902, there were only 12 girls' schools in the Federated Malay States as a whole; ten in Perak and two in Selangor with 234 total students enrolled (Anggraini & Oliver, 2019) as opposed to 159 schools for boys with a total of 1331 students (Muhammad Ridzuan & Arba'iyah, 2014). Swettenham, who was the

Governor of Malaya appointed by the British declared that education should not be given to Malay girls. Researchers and historians responded to Swettenham and the Malay prejudices that the school be a place to spread Christianity spread and mix freely between men and women. Moreover, parents were afraid of losing the assistance of their daughters at home.

In addition, the West also often considers Muslim women in the East to be ignorant, and easily exploited and arbitrarily treated them with various forms of oppression. Eastern Muslim women are considered so tied to traditional customs and culture that it seemed to open up space and opportunities for men to enslave women (Raja Ishak, 2018). For example, Malay parents still think that women should not rise to the men's level and therefore, they believed that women do not necessarily need to be educated to the same degree as men. In addition, they were also worried that if their daughters went to school, they would freely mingle with the boys, which is unacceptable according to the norms of the Malay people. In addition, the customs and traditions of the Malays who are Muslims could not accept such a practice.

In 1930, several events occurred in Malaya such as the world economic recession, the Japanese occupation, Hartal, Three Stars attacks and a series of arrests involving political activists. It is enlightening for the communities came together to fight for Malaya's independence. During this time, women began to fight for their homeland and their rights. For instance, Shamsiah Fakeh – was one of the Malay's women struggled to defended her homeland from invaders and liberate Malay's women (Ting, 2013) and she was said that, "Malay independence is the first step for the emancipation of women" (Aisyah Ab Rahim, 2012).

In fact, in 1944, a special women's organisations called the Malay Women's Voluntary Service Corps was established. The activities of this organisation were not political in nature, but rather based on charitable and socio-economic activities to support the policies of the Japanese military government which at that time campaigned the idea of a Greater Asia. Women were active in the political parties at that time whose main purpose was to liberate their homeland (Rahimi Hasan, 2013).

In 1946, during the Second World War, the Japanese occupation adopted Malay women because of their nationalism. This spirit of nationalism was lost through the women's resistance against the Malayan Union in 1946 (Muhammad Rahimi, 2017). Britain had planned to introduce the Malayan Union in 1946, however, the Malay's women changed their attitude during the planning phase. For example, Malay women leaders (*Kaum Ibu*) participated in the convention to protest the Malayan Union, delivered a speech and participated in a rally to oppose the plans to establish a British colonial union which was considered dangerous to the Malays. The involvement of women at the time has become a landmark case of how the Malays vehemently objected to something for the first time in Malaya's modern (Khairudin Aljunied, 2013).

In addition, by December 1946, at least 10 Malay women's organisations were active in major cities in the Malayan Peninsula such as in Kluang, Muar, Pontian, Taiping, Kuala Krai, Hulu Langat, Melaka, Seremban, Kuantan and Perak Hilir. In general, the above women's organisations shared similar goals which was to free Malaya from colonial. The purpose of their establishment was to increase the status of women in society, establish religious classes to increase unity and patriotism and increase literacy levels among women (Arenfeldt & Golley, 2012).

Ahmad Samad (1993) argued that the Japanese occupation in Malaya actually fueled the emancipation of women, especially among women who had been illiterate for a long time. In his book *Memoir A.Samad Ismail di Singapura*, he described that, "...The girls of my village who were in the years before the war, when I was still in school, were only exposed to us through the cracks of the curtains of their house windows, in those days the Japanese had gone out to work as labourers and clerks in the city, the traditional walls that enclosed them all this time have collapsed as a result of the war..."

At the same time, there was intense discussion of the role of women and modernisation that took the world by storm. This was not a new thing but for the Kaum Muda, who were influenced by the young Turkish movement (Gerakan Turki Muda) in the early 20th century, the idea of reform included the formation of 'new women' that developed in Europe in the 19th century and had spread to Turkey and was subsequently absorbed in their struggle (Muhammad Rahimi & Hamid, 2017). The need for 'new women' in Asian countries is a sign of the spread of Western Feminism ideas that left a great influence on the emancipation movement in Asian and Middle Eastern countries mostly driven by male reformists.

Although Malaya's women's movements are not organised like those in Indonesia, they still grappled with the issue of women's emancipation that hindered the nation's progress (Arba'iyah, 2020). The issue was extended through the efforts of the Johor Women's Teachers Association (PGPJ), which was established to increase women's literacy rate in the struggle to grant modern education for girls (Hasnah, 2011). By around the 1950s, results of such movements continued to show from the increasing number of schools and female students across the Straits Settlements, the Federated

Malay States and the Non-Federated Malay States (Mahani Musa, 2010). In addition, leaders of women's emancipation movements and the Malay PGPJ leader used magazine called upon all Malays to defend and improve women's quality of life for the sake of the nation's progress.

In fact, a handful of Malay parents started to realise better education for their daughters with some even sending their daughters to study outside the country, especially in Indonesia at a young age (Abdul Rahim, 2012). For example, Sakinah Junid, Shamsiah Fakeh and Aishah Ghani received their education in an Arabic school at Padang Panjang, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Anis Sabirin also highlighted in the newspaper *Utusan Melayu* 1969 that, the new women of the 20th century were a group that were undergoing change - smart, daring to demand equal rights to that of men and therefore, should not be treated as second-class citizens.

After fighting for the emancipation of women, at the end of the 20th century, women's struggles veered towards defending equal rights with men, especially in politics and career (Domenico & Jones, 2007). For example, Fatimah Hamad and Fatimah Hashim who were teachers for Kaum Ibu, struggled to demand the same salary as men. At the same time, women also started to participate in services previously dedicated to men, and services catered to overseas clients. Meanwhile, the Attorney General's Office (Che Siti Norma Yaacob) and the appointment of Aishah Ghani and Aishah Hamid Don as senator.

In a nutshell, the emancipation and modernisation experienced by many Malay's women were motivated by their own self-awareness and triggered by reformist men. For example, the struggle towards upholding women's rights was not accompanied by the liberation of their associations, but rather through professional aid. Such

professionals included; teachers, journalist and researchers of the current 20th century generation that steered the aspect of feminism in Malaya at the time.

1.7.3 Women Issues in the Malay Writings

The struggle to uphold women's rights was not actually accompanied by a movement or a clear women's liberation association but instead pioneered by men and women intellectuals through discourse in the field of writing. Malay female literacy struggled to write with a voice of their own and present ideas based on their reactions to Malaya's shift towards modernisation. Although far from smelling of reform, popular writings such as household tips and recipe books actually contain the aspirations of women that pursuing modernisation should not destroy motherly characteristics in relation to the role of women in the household. One of the popular books offering household tips and printed several times is the writings of Sarifah Alawiah Syed Teh al-Habshi entitled *Syair Nasihat Perempuan*, published in 1903 and reprinted in 1906 (Hashim, 2007).

In the early 20th century, women's issues were written in magazines such as *Majalah Guru*, *Saudara*, *Kenchana*, *Bulan Melayu*, *Al-Ikhwan*, *Majalah Lembaga Melayu* and many others. These magazines actually discussed many issues and concerns on various aspects of the Malay society. However, issues concerning women retained a special place among the authors of these magazines. For example, in '*Majalah Guru*' a special section titled 'Female Division' was dedicated to female teachers to express their voices. Malay women's teachers used this section to express their voices such as on the issue of education, Malay customs and traditions, marriage problems, women's character, and the lackadaisical attitude of Malays in pursuing education and health care (Mohammed Fawzi, 2012).

Another example is *Majalah Kenchana* which is regarded as the pioneering women's magazine published in Kota Bharu Kelantan, in April 1930 by Mariam Saadi. This magazine was written using *Jawi* letters and printed by Maktabah al-Kamaliah in Kota Bharu, Kelantan (Hussiin, 2011). The establishment of this magazine was also to promote women's education and progress. *Kenchana* provided the column 'Bahagian Kaum Ibu - in order to discuss education and women's position in Kelantan and the rest of the Malay states. The magazine's editor-in-chief, Asaad Shukri used this magazine to offer opportunities to writers to highlight emancipation of women and women's crafts in Kelantan.

In addition, *Majalah Bulan Melayu* which was published in 1932-1941 by the Malay Women Teachers Association of Johor also highlights many women issues, as inspired by a popular women's magazine in Europe. The lead author of this magazine was Ibu Zain, who actively fought for Malaysia's independence. She was also a teacher. Hence, the magazine aimed to raise the issue of women's welfare and create awareness on the importance of modern education to help women adapt to a new and ready life that seeks more complete knowledge in accordance with the requirements of Islam (Hussiin, 2011; Mahani Musa 2010). Other women-focused magazines during that time included *Ibu Melayu* (1946), *Dewan Perempuan*, *Ibu* and *Puteri*.

Besides magazines, newspapers also had an important influence in promoting women's issues. For instance, *Saudara* was published in September 1928 by Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī, but women's issues were discussed in depth only in 1934 (Mustikawati, 2015). It discussed the emancipation of Malay women much later mostly because it was influenced by the writings of magazines and newspapers in Turkey and Egypt which at that time had started to raise Feminist issues (Ruhana, 2017). Moreover,

Saudara also raised the incidences of moral issues, criticising prostitution activities involving Malay women due to the influence of Westernisation policy and modern lifestyle brought about by the British. Prostitution, adultery, gambling, and materialism would only negatively impact women (Hussiin, 2011). Therefore, the appearance of *Saudara* opened up a new dimension of awareness for the community, especially regarding their views toward women.

Apart from magazines and newspapers, literary writing such as novels also played significant role in expressing women's issues directly and indirectly. These novels include *Hikayat Faridah Hanom* (1925/1926) by Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī, *Iakah Salmah* (1920) by Ahmad Rashid Talu, *Mencari Isteri* (1929) by Muhammad Yusuf Ahmad, *Melor Kuala Lumpur* (1930) by Harun Aminurashid, *Melati Kota Bharu* (1941) by Abdul Khadir Adabi, *Korban Kesuciannya* (1949) by Keris Mas, *Ustazah* (1950) by Ahmad Lutfi, *Salina* (1961) by A.Samad Said, *Sayang Ustazah Sayang* (1968) and the book by Salmi Manja, *Hikayat Percintaan Kasih Kemudaan* (1975) which was written by Ahmad Kotot, and many others.

Therefore, issues concerning women in Malay writing had a lot of positive impact on the society at that time (Ruhana, 2017). Besides, Mahani Musa (2010), Hussiin (2011) and Padzil (2017) agreed that Malay writings raised the awareness of women's issues in society and contributed to opening the minds of the Malay society about such issues.

1.7.4 Women Issues Written by Male Scholars

Islamic intellectuality in the Nusantara began to appear in the 19th century and continued to expand until the 20th century. This case is evidenced by the emergence of

a large number of scholars in that century who played a significant role in the development and consolidation of Islamisation of the local community in all aspects of life. Ismail Che Daud mentions in his book, *Tokoh-tokoh Ulama Semenanjung Melayu* that more than forty Malay's scholars lived in the 20th century. For instance, in Terengganu, the scholars were Tok Ku Paloh, Haji Ngah Muhammad, Tok Ku Tuan Embong, Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong, Syed Saqaf and Haji Abdul Rahman Abdullah (Abdullah et al., 2017). Besides, in Kedah, the scholars were Hussain Nasir ibn Muhammad Taib al-Mas'udi al-Banjari or better known as Tuan Hussain Kedah (Mohd Mustaqim, 2018), Haji Abdullah Langgar and Haji Yahya Kupang.

The scholars brought various issues concerning aspects of Islamic life and reform the Malay's society in the field of educations, economics, politics and so on. Some of them talked about women in their writings such as Aḥmad bin Ya'qūb (1891-1959) who is the author of *Kitab Adab Perempuan*, Abdullah 'Abdur-rahmān (1876-1950), the author of *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*, Haji Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar bin Aminuddin bin Abdul Karim (1854-1932), the writer of *Tafsir Nur al-Iḥsan* and Mohamed Idris Abdul Raof al-Marbawi (1896-1989), who authored *Bahr al-Madhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*.

Another example is Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī is an important figure who instilled the spirit of reform and modernisation of the nation through the Malay community in particular, and Islam in general. He wrote various genres to educate the community about understanding of the right of women. *Hikayat Faridah Hanum* (1925/1926), one of among his writings that stress on women's issues in novel format.

Through the novel *Hikayat Faridah Hanum*, Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī gave awareness to the Muslim community to return to the teachings of the Qur'ān and

Ḥadīth, abandon old-fashioned thinking, oppose colonial thinking, mobilise scientific and modern thinking and increase educational awareness, especially women's education. In addition, he also included elements of women's emancipation in the novel. Among the issues in the novel include - women's education, husband and wife obligations, women's responsibilities to the household, political rights, social rights and issues of women's clothing. Commenting on that, Khairudin Aljunied (2013) argued that the modernisation and emancipation of women as debated by Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī contradicted the statement that still limits the activities of women in the domestic arena where he did not encourage them to have a career like men or be active in sports like Western women. He supported Malay women to study at a high level but still remain within their domestic space. Women are not encouraged to work because the household and education of children demand great commitment and sacrifice from the mother.

Other than Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī, many other Malay scholars also discussed issues concerning women in their writings. Among the published their works between 1900 to 1950 were that of Ahmad bin Ya'qūb (1891-1959), the author of *Kitab Adab Perempuan*, Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān (1876-1950), the author of *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*, Haji Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar bin Aminuddin bin Abdul Karim (1854-1932), the author of *Tafsir Nur al- Iḥsan*, Mohamad Idris Abdul Raof al-Marbawi (1896-1989) and in his book *Baḥr al-Madhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī* and Syeikh Ahmad al-Fattani (1856-1908), the author of *Bisyaratul 'Amilin wa Nazaratul Ghafilin*.

The emergence of male scholars in the world of social construction may not necessarily eliminate existing women's issues. From modifications and gender

construction on the other hand, the scholars presented a convincing approach without altering the entire previous construction but rather straightened it according to the spirit of Islamic teachings (Prayetno, 2019). The emergence of male scholars who discussed the issue of women also had a positive impact on society on concerning the view of equality between men and women. In short, it can be seen that the male scholars defended women.

1.7.5 Previous Research

Great attention is needed to discuss anything regarding society, but there is a limited number of resources that have discussed the core issues in this study. This section will explain briefly past studies relating to Malay writings in the 20th century which have been written by Malay scholars and which have discussed issues concerning women. There are a few studies from which a research gap can be found, that are related to the present study. However, all available literature such as journals, books, research works, dissertations, and other related reading material will also be referred to. This section aims to analyse a few previous studies that are closely related to this study. It also aims to fill the gap that has not been discussed in the previous research.

The first work in similar vein to the current study is the article entitled *Isu-isu Wanita dalam Manuskrip Melayu Abad ke-15 hingga abad ke-18* which was written by Haryati Hasan (2014). Not many researchers had written about the issue of women especially Malay manuscripts. This article selected four centuries as the time of study, the 15th to 18th century by focusing on the role of Malay's women in traditional historiography and the importance of women in ensuring stability, peace and security by analysing the texts of *Sejarah Melayu*, *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and *Rengasan Cetera Kelatan*. Although the current study will not cover any manuscripts

written before 20th century, this article will still be used, albeit as an additional reference only. This study will cover the historical background of the Malay women's position while focusing on one century only, which is the 20th century.

The discussion concerning women became more intense with the introduction of the yellow book (*turath* book) in the early 20th century. Among the books that focused on women is *Kitab Kuning dan Perempuan, Perempuan dan Kitab Kuning* which was written by Martin van Bruinessen (1993). The author's purpose of writing the book was to answer the question of Masdar F. Mas'udi, who is known as a person who is critical of the traditional yellow book (*turath* book). It analyses how women are viewed as discriminatory in a number of yellow books (*turath* book) which were widely used in the religious school (*pondok*). Therefore, the issue was described in a chapter in this book called *Kitab Kuning dan Emansipasi Perempuan: Konflik Budaya?* It was found that the content of the yellow book is a combination of the main teachings of Islam (Qur'ān and Ḥadīth) with local culture. Culture is something that is always changing, so if the contents of the yellow book do not suit society, maybe it would just cater to the culture at the time. Thus, the present study will also discuss the issue of emancipation among Malays, as written by Malay male scholars.

Besides the issue of emancipation, the yellow book (*turath* book) is also not amiss in discussing gender issues. A similar issue was described by Mohd Anuar Ramli (2010) in his article *Pemikiran "Mesra Gender" dalam Karya Fiqh Ulama Melayu Klasik*. The author found that the views of Malay Muslim scholars on Classical Islamic Law was to take on a more intimate approach of discussing gender issues for women. They also emphasised on the interaction of customary laws and traditions concerning the status of women. For instance, the concepts of matrimonial property were decided

to be the right of women in the classical Malay rule. This shows that the scholars were 'women-friendly' in Islamic teaching and promoted no discrimination against women. The issue was also discussed in *fiqh* writings compiled by Malay scholars, among them Syeikh Dawud al-Fatani, Syeikh Arshad al-Banjari and Syeikh Ahmad Muhammad Zayn al-Fatani. This article however only focused on *fiqh* writing whereas the current study will cover a lot of writings taken from various fields such as *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* written by Haji Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar (1854-1932). He is one of the scholars, who seeks to understand the justice and equality promoted by the verses of the Qur'an with a tafsir approach especially gender equality in the Qur'an.

Additionally, the same author also wrote an article entitled *Metodologi Analisis Gender dalam Hukum Islam*. The study aimed to describe a gender analysis and its application in Islamic jurisprudence. Gender inequalities were found in the pattern of relationships between men and women in society generally and in Islamic Law particularly. For example, there are laws that can change and there are laws that stay despite the changing of time or place. Permanent law is a clear law stated in the Qur'an and Sunnah such as the necessity of polygamy, the right to inherit for men and women (2: 1), and the right to testify (1: 2) (Muhammad Anuar, 2013). Meanwhile, laws that can change are laws that are not based on *qat'i* such as female circumcision and *diyat*. The gender analysis put forth by the study answered the issues related to gender injustice in Muslim society. Thus, the present study will analyse the verses of Qur'an and Hadith in Malay writings by male scholars concerning women issues specifically gender and emancipation and will strive to prove whether or not male scholars discriminated against women in their writings.

However, issues concerning women have mostly been written by male scholars as has been discovered in an article called *Women Characters in the Hands of Men Writers* by Siti Aisyah Murad (2007). For example, the author discussed that Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī succeeded in developing the female character by overstepping the cultural norms of his time, by which women must obey their elders in whatsoever, for example in the matter of education. The author composed the character of this woman in the novel *Hikayat Faridah Hanum*. Then, Ahmad Rashid Talu wrote a novel entitled *lakah Salmah* (1928) whose female character, Salmah, also had qualities which went against the qualities of stereotypical women characters in works by men, as expounded by Elaine Showalter. Salmah was a progressive woman who was willing to fight for her people and her race lifted the status of women. This study will also focus on Malay writings in the 20th century but not only on novels; other Malay writings such as newspapers, magazines, and so on will also be analysed. The study will also focus on analysing selected Malay writings on women, based on their historical background and by looking at their character, status, and struggles.

Furthermore, an article entitled *Jati Diri Wanita Aceh dalam Manuskrip* as discussed by Fakhriati (2015), highlighted women leaders in Aceh such as Putri Lindung Bulan, Puteri Pahang, Ratu Nihrasiyah Rawangsa Khadiyu, Ratu Safiatuddin, Ratu Naqiatuddin, Ratu Zakiatuddin, and Ratu Keumalat Syah Laksamana, Teungku Fakinah, Cut Nyak Dhien, Cut Meutia, Pocut Meurah Intan, Pocut Baren, and Teungku Fakinah. Zentgraaff (2012), described all of these women in a short sentence as ‘de leidster het verzet’, which means ‘resistance leader’ or ‘grandes dames.’ The three attitudes or identities that made them great women are obedience and knowledgeable, wise and brave, as well as persevering and patient. Their story was described in a manuscript written in Aceh, the *Burma Intisa*, which is still kept by the people of Aceh.

Meanwhile, the current study will focus on Malay women only but it will also cover characters akin to that of the Aceh women such as knowledgeable, brave, and patient. This case is proven with the establishment of the Malay Women's Movement and the emergence of nationalism.

Overall, the above literature will assist the author in conducting the study. Taking these points further, the present study aims to fill the gap found in the previously mentioned literature in analysing the women's issues in the Malay writings in the 20th century by the selected Malay male scholars. Their writings will cover wider women's issues especially about their interpretation of religious texts concerning women. Moreover, the present study will discuss further on the concept of the emancipation of women that have been highlighted by male Malay's scholars in their writings.

1.8 Research Methodology

The nature of this research will depend on the qualitative method which is mainly dealing with the reasoning behind a social phenomenon. According to Othman (2012), Greswell (2008), and Mason (2002), qualitative studies emphasize more on the exploration and adaptation of processes and meanings, holistic in nature, evolving design, using purposive sampling, data collection and real background, researcher as instrument, electronic and document data collection method, inductive research strategies, and reporting of research results in the form of long narratives. Additionally, according to Strauss and Corbin (2009), qualitative studies produce findings that cannot be obtained from quantitative methods such as human life, life experiences, human understanding, emotions and feelings or related to organizational functions, behaviors,

cultural phenomena, and international relations. Therefore, this study has applied qualitative method in collecting and analyzing data. The details as in following:

1.8.1 Data Collection

According to Bowen (2009), data collection is the process of gathering and analyzing accurate data from various sources to find answer to research problems, trend and probabilities as well as to evaluate possible outcome. This study collected the data by gathering the Malay male scholars' writings that covered about women's issues and published in the 20th century. At the initial stage, this study found that there are twenty manuscripts that discussed about women issues directly and indirectly. The details of the writings as show in the Table 1.0:

Table 1.1: The writings of Malay scholars in the 20th that covered women's issue.

Title of Writings	Author of the Writings
<i>Kitab Alam Perempuan</i>	Syed Syeikh Ahmad al-Hadi (1867-1934)
<i>Kitab Adab Perempuan</i> (1926)	Ahmad bin Ya'qub (1891-1959)
<i>Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan</i> (1939)	Abdullāh 'Abdul Rahman (1876-1950)
<i>Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan</i>	Haji Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar bin Aminuddin bin Abdul Karim (1854-1932)
<i>Bahr al-Madhi Sharh Mukhtasar Sahih al-Tirmidhi & Kitab Idangan Guru Sahih al-Bukhari wa Muslim</i>	Mohamed Idris Abdul Rauf al-Marbawi (1896-1989)
<i>Bisyaratul 'Amilin wa Nazaratul Ghafilin</i>	Syeikh Ahmad Al-Fattani (1856-1908)
<i>Ilham al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari Bahasa Melayu & Tajdhib Atraf al-Hadith bi Sharh Ma fi Kitab Mukhtar al-Hadith</i>	Abdul Halim al-Hadi (1904-1981)

<i>Tadhkir Qaba'il al-Qadahi fi Tarjamah Jawahir al-Bukhari (Jawahir al-Bukhari)</i>	Syeikh Husayn Nasir bin Muhammad Tayyib al-Banjari atau Tuan Haji Husayn Kedah (1863-17935)
<i>Arba'in li al-Nabhaniyyah, Lubab al-Hadith, Misbah al-Zhalam wa al-Bahjah al-Anam.</i>	Haji Abu Bakar Palestin atau Haji Abu Bakar Bin Hanafiah Bin Taib Bin Haji Ismail Bin Ahmad al-Qadhi (1908-1998)
<i>Manhaj Dhawi al-Nadhar & Kifayah al-Mustafid Lima Ala Min alAsanid</i>	Syeikh Muhammad Mahfuz bin Abdullah al-Tarmasi (1868-1920)
<i>Mulayanah al-Qulub Ila al-Tadhakkur li 'Alamat al-Ghuyub</i>	Haji Muhammad Husayn bin Abdul Latif atau Tok Kelaba (1863-1948)
<i>Kanz al-Amin fi Sharh al-Arba'in</i>	Tuan Guru Haji Mukhtar bin Ahmad bin Muhammad Zayn
<i>Mukhtasar Ibn Abi Jamrah Tafsir al-Quran al-Hakim</i>	Mustafa Abdul Rahman Mahmud (1918-1968)
<i>Matali al-Anwar 'Ala Majami' al-Azhar</i>	Syeikh Uthman Jalaluddin al-Kalantani (1880 – 1952)
<i>Muhimmah fi Ilm al-Hadith (1949)</i>	Syeikh Abdullah bin Abdul Rahim al-Fatani
<i>Kepalsuan Yang Masyhur Dalam Mejelaskan Beberapa Hadith dan Khabar yang Masyhur</i>	Ahmad Ali Abu Bakar

Subsequently, this study applied document review by examining the writings to determine if they are relevant, applicable or available. After reviewing each writing, this research divides them into groups according to the identified characteristics. Among the sample selection criteria were publication years, which were around 1900 to 1960 (early 20th century); published in *Jawi*; and contains Qur'anic verses and Hadiths concerning on women's issues. Finally, this research identified five writings that fulfill each of these criteria. The following are the list of the writings that are the main focus of this study:

1. *Kitab Adab Perempuan*, written by Ahmad bin Ya'qub (1891-1959);
2. *Kitab Alam Perempuan*, written by Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hadi (1867-1934);
3. *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*, written by Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān (1876-1950);

4. *Tafsir Nur al- Ihsan*, written by Haji Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar bin Aminuddin bin Abdul Karim (1854-1932);
5. *Baḥr al-Madhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*, written by Mohamed Idris Abdul Raof al-Marbawi (1896-1989),

1.8.2 Data Analysis

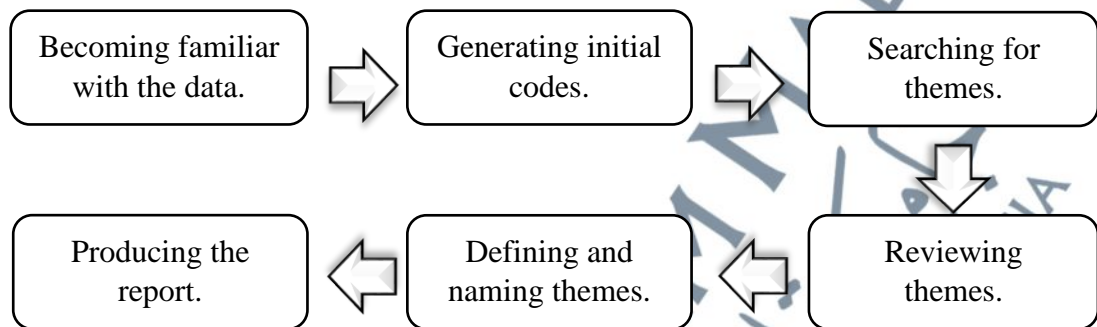
After the writings have been identified and the data has been generally collected there are three important methods in analysing the data:

First, content analysis is the main method of analysis. It is a research technique used to identify the existence of specific words, topics, or concepts in a given set of qualitative data (i.e., text) (Berelson, 2012). To conduct content analysis, a systematically collect data from of a set of texts, which can be written, oral, or visual such as books, newspaper, and magazines. Therefore, it is applied by closely examining each content in the selected writings by the male Malay's scholars. Priority is given to the content that addresses issues concerning women and analysed the content detailly.

Second, textual analysis is used in examining and exploring the sources. It is a methodology that involves understanding language, symbols, and pictures present in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense of and communicate life and life experiences (Manning & Weninger, 2004). The purpose of textual analysis is to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015). It is a way of gathering and analysing information in academic research (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2016) and used as a process for analyzing text data (Burrows, 2007).

Lastly, thematic analysis used in to examine data with the goal of spotting trends or particular themes in the information that has been gathered (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Heriyanto: 2018). This study will apply the six stages outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) since analysing the data. The stages are represented in the following figure.

Figure 1: Six Stages of Thematic Analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006)



This subject of this study is becoming familiar with the selected Malay's writings; by reading and re-reading the data and systematically contextualising the text, there scholars' discussions about women are examined. After that, the data on women's words were then manually coded in this research using coloured sticky notes. Coding is not simply a method and conceptual reading of the data. This study codes every data item and ends this stage by collating all their codes and relevant data extracts.

Following that, searching a theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. In this study, extracted words related to *wanita* such as: *perempuan, isteri, anak perempuan, gadis* and others including the Arabic grammar (*nahu*) either in the original text of the Arabic and also the translation of the Arabic words (Malay language) and ends this stage by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme.

Subsequent to this, the study reviewing the theme and begin the process of theme development. This study divided the theme into four themes, which are;

emancipation of women through Islamic law (Sharia), emancipation of women in education, emancipation of women in social aspects and emancipation of women through the stories of the Prophet's female companions PBUH. Presently, this study writes a detailed analysis of each theme and identifying the 'essence' of each theme. Finally, the last stage for the study was to analyse the interpretation of the selected Malay scholars in the emancipation of women in their writings.

In conclusion, this sub-chapter covered the methodology of this study that was executed, and this study implement the document analysis process in qualitative research. In order to collect the data, this study used the selected Malay's writings. Further information, the data was analysed using contextual, textual and thematic as the analysis tools.

1.9 Conclusion

In a nutshell, women's issues have constantly been discussed in the past and present, and will continue in the future among researchers locally and globally. This is because women's issues are often associated with the gender inequality between men and women. This topic has been a part of many cultures for hundreds of years, as most of the time, it causes oppression towards women. Hambur and Nurhayati (2019) stated that gender inequality is a social phenomenon, which consists of the idea that men are superior and women are inferior. This idea is a part of the hegemonic construct, which is often called 'gender-paradigm'. Several communities in the world even intentionally create inequality for men and women. According to Rowbotham (2013), through these intentional or accidental forces, gender inequality is gradually acknowledged an important social phenomenon.

Given such phenomena, this study aims to examine the Malay women's position in the 20th century. It can be concluded that women during that time were still viewed as weak human beings especially in the early of the 20th century. Some of the Malay societies at the time insulted and discriminated against women. Various issues concerning women were also discussed at the time especially emancipation issues. However, the situation changed as women began to gain consciousness and began to rise to defend themselves from the traditional thinking that restricts them from joining various fields like the social arena, education, politics, and so on.

Similarly, with the emergence of reformists and Islamic scholars discussing issues concerning women in their writings, the discussion tends towards Islamic laws related to women, and questioning whether Islam also restricts women's freedom. For example, in discussing education issues; women can seek knowledge just like men. This is evidenced in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, which states that women are also obliged to seek knowledge. So, male scholars seriously discussed this issue in their writing. Furthermore, emancipation issues were written by many scholars such as Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī, Ahmad bin Ya'qub, Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān, and others in their writings.

The results of this study will help the reader better understand Islamic teachings concerning gender justice in which equal opportunity is given to both men and women, and that the male scholars also applied women-friendly approaches to their interpretation of Islamic texts. Furthermore, women in the Malay society have the rights to emancipation and empowerment based on the Islamic perspective.