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Documenting Knowledge through Oral History: Islamic Awareness among the Malaysian Malays

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Abstract

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The literature proposes that the participation among Malay middle income class in the Islamic Resurgence was significantly noticeable in helping the upsurge of Islamic consciousness in urban cities in Malaysia. How do they perceive this? How does the Malay middle income class obligate to Islamic teaching? This study aims to analyze the Malay middle income class' commitment to Islamic teaching based on their convictions and their participation in Islamic Resurgence and activities. Exploratory qualitative approach is used for this multidisciplinary historical and socio-religious research. Documentation of knowledge with five informants of the Malay middle income class was conducted through oral history. Samples were selected purposefully based on criterion sampling. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed through content and descriptive analyses. Data showed significant roles played by the Malay middle income class in Islamic activities led to the revival of Islamic Resurgence in the urban areas. In general, Islamic Resurgence contributes to positive impacts on the Malay Muslim middle income class' religious practices and commitments. The study indicated that the Islamic Resurgence contributes to the emergence of the great number of moderate Muslims and the progressive development of Islam in Malaysia.

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1. Introduction

Knowledge needs to be documented for it to be disseminated, shared and effectively used. Most knowledge lie in the minds of people in the form of experiences, beliefs, values, reminiscences and expertise. Oral history is one of the mechanisms to elicit, capture and document these priceless intellectual assets and transform into explicit and tangible form. A phenomenon that is in tandem with the development of modern Malaysia is closely related to Islamic Resurgence. However, it is not given appropriate coverage in previous studies.

Islamic Resurgence is a socio-religious phenomenon evolving mainly a reaction to the current situation in the Muslim world. Since the emergence of the contemporary wave of global Islamic Resurgence which traced its roots in 1970s, this religious phenomenon has also greatly contributed to the mushrooming of Islamic *dakwah* organizations in Malaysia which directly involved the participation of the Malay middle income class.

Would the awareness on the fundamental belief and teaching of Islam, their religious commitments among the Malay middle income class be a manifestation of the Islamic Resurgence? How would the Malays react towards the Islamic Resurgence to reaffirm Islam in their life? This paper aims to analyze the Malay middle income class' commitment on Islamic teachings based on their convictions and experiences. Additionally, it also attempts to analyze the Islamic awareness among the same group through their participation in the Islamic organizations, programs and activities. Capturing and documenting this vast and first-hand knowledge through oral history could help to preserve invaluable intangible tacit knowledge for future references.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of the Middle Income Class

Being affluent, educated and agent of social change, the middle class gain prominence by their income level, and become a pressure group in struggling to the issues pertaining social change and socio-economic development. Based on the latest measurement of the social class status in Malaysian perspective, this paper utilizes a combination of the occupational categories and household income to define the middle class. According to the Tenth Malaysian Plan 2011-2015, the household income range according to social class in 2009, for middle 40 per cent of the households is between RM 2,300 to RM 5,599, while the top 20 per cent of the households is greater than or equal to RM 5,600 (*The Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015*, 2010). A study that was conducted by Wan Nor Azriyati, Noor Rosly and Kuppusamy (2011) indicated that the lower-income category are those earned RM1000 or less; the lower-middle income category are those earned between RM 1,501 and RM 2,000; the middle-middle category are who earned between RM 2,001 and RM 4,000; the upper-middle income are those earned between RM 4,001 and RM 6,000; and the high income group are those earned RM 6001 and RM 8000 (Wan Nor Azriyati et al., 2011). The occupational model of Abdul Rahman Embong (2002), and the

household income range used in the Government Transformation Plan 2011-2015 document and Wan Nor Azriyati et al. (2011), are adapted as a guide to conduct this study.

From this household income range, the middle income class can be categorized by those who earns between RM 2,301 to RM 5,599, and the middle class with the high income or the upper-middle income who earns between RM 5,600 and above than RM 10,000. Underpinning the above classification, middle class then refers to professionals, technical, administrative, managerial workers, clerical and service sector who earn minimum household incomes between RM 2,300 to RM 10,000 and above per month.

2.2 *The Malay Middle Class and the Islamic Resurgence*

Islamic Resurgence can be defined as a description of efforts and attempts to regenerate Islamic way of life guided by Divine source of the Quran and Sunnah through creating the awareness of Islamic practices, values, and social order in the daily lives of Muslims (Dessouki, 1982; Khurshid Ahmad, 1983; Chandra Muzaffar, 1987; Sundaram & Ahmed Shabery Cheek, 1988; Esposito, 1991; Huntington, 1996; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 1999).

Islamic Resurgence can also be described as a phenomenon where there are increasing responses on the religious physical ritual observations such as, "...mosque attendance, prayer and fasting, production of religious activities, programs and publications. However, more emphasis is given on Islamic dress and values, and the renaissance of *Sufism* (mysticism). This broader-based revival has also been complemented by Islam's reaffirmation in public life: like an increasing effort in Islamically oriented governments, organizations, laws, banks, social welfare services and educational institutions" (Esposito, 1995, p. 10).

A great variety of studies on Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia which have appeared in the past three decades have related this phenomenon with the emergence of the middle class. Rapid development of Islamic Resurgence as a result of several efforts to re"Islamise" the Malays in particular, and purify their belief, have concerned many contemporary Western and the Middle Eastern scholars, such as Nagata (1980, 1984, 1994), Esposito (1983), Camroux (1996), Roff (1998), Hamayotsu (2002), Funston (2006) and Stark (2008) on the discussion of Islamisation in Malaysia.

Some local writers have embarked the discourse on this religious social change in observing Malaysian Malay Muslims' commitment on the Islamic belief (Mohamad Abu Bakar, 1981, 2005), the middle class' commitment and increasing responses on the Islamic Resurgence (Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, 1983; Zainah Anwar, 1987; Chandra Muzaffar, 1987; Husin Muttalib, 1990, 1993), their participation in Islamic politics and social aspects (Nurul Asma Mazlan, Wan Kamal Mujani & Noor Inayah Ya'akub, 2012), the state initiative for Islamisation projects (Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 2007, 2010; Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2000; Liow, 2009) and religious physical observations (Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan, 1999; Saodah Abd. Rahman & Abu Sadat Nurullah, 2012; Mohammad Redzuan Othman, 2015).

Of all the studies on the above matters, only the study by Ahmad Sunawari Long (2010) focuses on the impact of Islamic Resurgence on the Malay Muslim middle class' religious practices and commitments in Klang Valley. Through the quantitative method he distributed 630 sets of questionnaires to respondents who resided or worked in Klang Valley. He analyzed data primarily from secondary sources like books, academic articles and television programs and discovered that Islamic Resurgence has delivered both positive and negative impacts on the Malay Muslim middle class' religious practices and commitments. Positively, it contributes to the emergence of the great number of moderate Muslims and to the development of Islam in Malaysia as a whole. On the other hand, it also contributes to extremism and the low degree of religious tolerance.

Ahmad Sunawari (2010) acknowledges that the government has predominantly contributed to the current tendency of religious commitment through its internal and foreign policies, but did not highlight the significant role played by the prominent *dakwah* organizations which have been led by the middle income class. Contributions by the later organizations cannot be understated in their role to assist the progressive development of Islam in Malaysia. Over the years much has been contributed by the middle income class towards the development of the country, particularly on the religious aspect. However, not much is known and readily available and documented to enhance our understanding. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore the role and contributions of the middle class' tendency on the religious aspects of life in an effort to document their convictions and commitments towards Islam. The emergence of the Malay middle income class does not only help to upsurge the economic development of the country, but also boost the sustainable economic growth that is guided by the religious values and principles.

Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia is always linked with the growth of students' *dakwah* movement and youth activism which leads to the formation of civil society such as, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (Angkatan Belia Islam - ABIM), The National Association of Muslim Students Malaysia (*Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia* - PKPIM) and traditional *dakwah* organization of Al-Arqam (Mohamad Abu Bakar, 1980; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 1999; Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan, 2005; Mohd Jamil Mukmin, 2009; Siti Hamisah Manan, 2009). Subsequently, these intellectual and educated groups have brought about many changes which can be seen through the government's responses to the demands of these groups in socio-cultural and educational reforms, administrative and management, economic policy and legal reforms. This is supported by Shamsul Amri Baharudin (1997, 1999) who also acknowledges the influence of Islamic Resurgence or *dakwah* groups which were initiated by members of new middle class or well-known as *Melayu Baru*, some of whom were cabinet ministers, senior bureaucrats, corporate figures and academicians.

Dakwah is undoubtedly a social force which continues to shape many events in the late 1980s. The remarkable impact of *dakwah* movements gave significant changes in understanding Islam comprehensively, introducing the Islamic terms and diminishing the un-Islamic traditions, which for a long time has taken place in Muslim practices (Nagata, 1980). Each *dakwah* movement and the Malay-based Islamic parties such as, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and Islamic Party of

Malaysia (PAS) participated and contributed to religious awareness and patterns of Islamism in Malaysia (Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 2008).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study is primarily conducted based on exploratory qualitative methodology for this multidisciplinary historical and socio-religious study. Documentation of knowledge through the semi-structured in-depth interviews with five informants of the Malay middle income class was conducted using oral history technique. The informants were chosen from a group individuals who are pioneers, who started their active involvement in Islamic activities in the 1970s in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Being pioneers, they share common thoughts and experience with regard to Islamic Resurgence.

Interview sessions were conducted with selected representatives of the Malay middle income class to obtain their insights and opinions on Islamic Resurgence and its impacts on their religious commitment. The researcher carried out themes or dimensions from interview transcripts. The themes and dimensions created were analysed in descriptive and content analysis.

3.2 The Selection of Informants

Sample in this qualitative research was selected purposefully guided by a set of criteria. Using purposeful sampling would be able to understand the phenomenon of Islamic Resurgence and how its influence on the middle income class in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The strategy for purposeful selection of information-rich cases is based on a specific type of purposeful sampling, that is criterion sampling (Patton, 1990). According to Patton, the purpose of criterion sampling is to pick all cases that meet some criteria. In the context of the current study, the samples chosen fit the set of criteria.

Justification for the choice of sampling in this study was based on three criteria. First, sampling was chosen through categorical selection which represented by the Malay individuals from the middle income class. Second, the Malay middle class individuals are those who live and work in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Third, the middle class individuals who are selected in the study are those who witnessed, participated, contributed to and have knowledge on Islamic consciousness activities among the Malay in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur.

3.3 Data Analysis

Through the interviews, meaning data was gathered. Each interview session took on the average, two and a half hours to complete and the sessions were recorded based on the permission by the informants. Subsequently, the content of the interviews were transcribed in the Microsoft Word document format. Data was manually analysed according to the thematic analysis principles whereby patterns of meaning were identified throughout the transcripts. This involved a highly iterative process by a comparative analysis of patterns emerging from the data before categories were developed and named.

4. Results and Discussion

This study involved five Malay middle income class informants. A brief background of the informants is as follows:

Table 1. The Background of the Malay Middle Income Class Informants

Informant Identity	Occupation	Age	Place of Living
Informant 1 – I1	Former general manager (oil and gas)	60	Kuala Lumpur
Informant 2 – I2	General manager (manufacturing)	73	Selangor
Informant 3 – I3	Academician	64	Kuala Lumpur
Informant 4 – I4	Businessman, social activist, politician	62	Selangor
Informant 5 – I5	Academician	61	Kuala Lumpur

As stated in Table 1, that the Malay middle income class informants who were involved in the study hold key positions in corporate agencies, government and private institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), institutions of higher learning and Islamic-based political party. All informants are older adults between the ages of 60 to 73 years old. This means that the informants' year of birth is between 1943 and 1952.

4.1 Islamic Awareness among the Malay Middle Income Class

The Malay middle income class informants were chosen from diverse professions. Most of them had attended the Western educational orientation which was inherited from the colonial power after Malaysia gained independence. Albeit having academic qualifications in different disciplines, they have shown relatively similar convictions to religious practices. In fact, their educational background does not limit their quest to deepen their faith and exhibit significant manifestations in thoughts and practices. Most of the informants demonstrated a significant adherence to the religion of Islam and thus resulting in high commitment to religious practices and spiritual activities throughout their lives.

The following discussion is divided into several sub-themes, as to highlight how Islam has impacted the lives of the Malaysian Malay middle income class.

4.1.1 Islam as the Driving Force in Life

The conviction to Islam has been the driving force of their career undertakings. Some of Malay middle income class put preference on their convictions before their career. This has been due to many reasons, such as the increase in religious knowledge which has led to religious commitments. Such religious awareness is intrinsic in nature.

“After I graduated in 1975, I was offered a few good jobs and I decided to work in a bank. But, after some years, I left the bank because I was getting feedbacks from many religious teachers that works in the bank are associated with riba’ (interest). I then joined an oil and gas agency in order to be disassociated with the riba’ system...” (I1)

"I believe that the Islamic values are the best..." (I2)

"From my point of view, our strong belief in Allah's help and guidance helps us to focus in our studies. This means that when we believe that when we work in His way, He will help us..." (I3)

"I am a native villager by origin and I was taught to pray since I was five years old. I often accompany my grandfather for Friday prayers at the mosque. But since the early 1970s, my practices increased to include qiyamullail, fasting and ma'thurat." (I4)

"In the Malaysian context, religion is a fundamental of life and we cannot deny it. Religion becomes our priority." (I5)

This is the most basic element of religious conviction, that is a strong belief that in whatever they do in their daily life, there is a guide to follow, which is directly from the Creator through His Messenger for mankind to follow. This is the binding factor that ensures the believers to embrace Islam as a way of life.

4.1.2 Islam Complies with Their Spiritual Quest

Some of the informants had embarked on a journey of understanding Islam since their early age. Most of them believed that Islam provides the answers to their spiritual quest. The reasons for this have been varied. The articulation of Islamic worldview has managed to balance their life between spiritual and material.

"If we believe Islam as the objective of life, it could solve the worldly problems, because this world is created by Allah SWT. We follow His way..." (I1)

"Whatever it is, I have to make sure that my money is halal, so Allah SWT would bless you. I donate to all the poor students... We look at the return in different ways (Islamic way) because I think Islamic values are the best. God will only help those who help themselves..." (I2)

"Alhamdulillah, one thing that differentiate me from others is that I have been involved in righteous deeds. I started to practise Islam, go to the mosque with my father since I was in the secondary school..." (I3)

"Previously, I was involved in theatre as an actor. From leisure activities I changed to be an ABIM member. The contributions of ABIM on me were great. My understanding of Islam increased." (I4)

"Of course, Islam can solve human problems. That is Allah's promise." (I5)

Based on their upbringing, following their parents and teachers as role models, the informants generally maintained a lifestyle and worldview based on their early exposure. When they grow up and

learn more about the religion, they found a match with what is prescribed by the religion as fitting to their norms developed along the way.

4.1.3 Increased in Their Religious Obligations

Islam orientates the informants to spiritual or religious enhancement programs, such as *usrah* (religious circles), religious talks, recitation of *du'a* (prayers) and Qur'anic recitations and *tazkirahs*. The Malay middle income class also attempt to oblige to the Islamic teaching through high religious commitment in their obligations and practices. Almost all informants of the Malay middle income class describe themselves as pious believers to the Islamic rules. Their tendency on the religious practices are supported by the public spheres that they are involved in, such as, their attendance in congregational prayers at the mosques and *musollas*, involvement in the Islamic-based organizations and in the general *dakwah* activities, participation in *dakwah* in the form of politics, or even in the context of religious activities for the ordinary public audiences, especially in the perspective of the multi-ethnic society in Malaysia.

“It is for sure my commitment to oblige to compulsory religious obligations besides the optional practices. When I join in the Islamic-based political party, my political commitment helps me to develop and influence other religious obligations. It also helps me to inculcate Islamic culture in my family.” (I1)

*“Because of my Islamic background, my tendency is also towards Islam. When I was in ABIM, I learned *tamrin* (Islamic training) syllabus and *usrah* curriculum”....In ABIM we are trained to avoid all sins.” (I4)*

*“This means that we practise the obligatory and the optional practices as what had been shown by the Prophet. The obligatory practices need to be accomplished, while the optional ones need to be increased... If someone understands the advantages of performing congregational prayer especially during the *fajr* prayers, then he will do it even he has to crawl...In the past I did not understand (Islam). But after pursuing knowledge and we searching for it, then we realized our ignorance. Therefore, *Jamaah Tabligh* want to create Islamic environment, and it hopes that Muslims will return to Islam.” (I5)*

Through the phases of Islamic Resurgence, there exist a concerted effort by Islamic organizations, the government and the community to offer a platform for the people to enhance their understanding of it. This is done through formal and informal programs within localities easily accessible by the people. This somehow creates an eco-system for the enhancement of their religious understanding and obligations.

Participation in the religious community activities and *dakwah* movement helps to increase the middle income class' religious practices and obligations, either in its specific forms of *ibadah* (obligatory and optional Islamic practices) such as, five times daily prayers, fasting, paying the alms giving (*zakah*), performing *hajj* to Makkah, performing *umrah* or visiting sacred places of Makkah and

Medina; or in its general forms of *ibadah*, like working, contributing to charities and donations and helping those in needs with the intentions that all deeds are for the sake of Allah SWT, the Almighty.

4.1.4 Strong Commitment to Islamic Dakwah Activities

Most of the informants found that it is their responsibility to disseminate the knowledge about Islam, to spread the message of Islam to others by inculcating religious values in work ethics, to familiarise the staff with Islamic culture at the workplace and do their best to show their high commitment to Islam in their daily practices.

“When I was in the main position in an oil and gas company, I took the initiative to conduct usrah (religious circles), invited a famous Ustaz Farid Ravi to give religious talks at my office during the lunch time. I saw that the staff improved their commitment to Islam”. (I1)

“Before we start working, we would listen to Qur’anic recitations. The head of the departments and divisions will give a ten-minutes talks on religion. Before you start working, you read du’[‘]a (prayers) and return with du’[‘]a ... I am now a wealthy hundred million individual, but I have my corporate social responsibility. I spend my money in a socially responsible manner. I put in values to my staff. I introduced to them to Islamic ethics and morality...” (I2)

“When I work on the dakwah, my motivation is that Allah will help me and I should help my friends to solve their problems.” (I3)

Based on the desire to spread Islamic teaching in the society, the informants followed the path set by the Prophet (pbuh) through direct engagement activities with the community. This has proved to be an effective approach which resulted in increased number of believers who gained better understanding of the religion.

4.2 The Malay Middle Income Class and Their Participation in the Islamic Resurgence

Among important characteristics or signs of Islamic awareness is the active participation of the Malay middle income class in Islamic Resurgence and activities.

4.2.1 A Life-long Mission for Islam

Most of the informants demonstrated a clear mission and vision to contribute and work for Islam. They are indebted to the religious organizations and intended to contribute to Islam in various activities, such as financial assistance, knowledge contribution and specialisation, trainings and personal assistance.

“I was chairman of NGOs, dealing with disabilities. I got involved in volunteerism. I gave a key note speech to 3,200 youths comprising of Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and Muslims...I was with ABIM, they invited me to give talks... I see Islam in many situations, international and global

issues. This is amal jariah... we must teach Islam and project Islam in the right way. That's why I am now involved in this (dakwah project)..." (I2)

"In the early 1970s, there was an urgency that we unite all schools of thought. Our understanding of Islam improved when we were exposed to Jamiatul Islami. Our friends received trainings from Hassan al-Banna and Said Nursi's groups. I cooperate with all people. After returning to the homeland, I was actively involved in dakwah programs, outreach and usrah run by Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM)..." (I3)

"In fact, Tabligh teaches man to continue his relationship with Allah SWT. This includes to remember Allah (zikrullah). That becomes our regular practices... When we practise dakwah, we preach Islamic pillars, Islamic beliefs and the Prophet's teachings. (I5)

In the subsequent phase of Islamic Resurgence, i.e. participation in activities to help others, it is observed that the informants were finding ways to extend their service, financially, materially or by providing ideas to enhance the understanding of Islam. Active contributions by communities of practice created a strong network for volunteerism among members.

4.2.2 Participation in the Islamic Resurgence from Early Stage

Most of the informants also acknowledged the historical background of Islamic Resurgence in 1970s which involved active participation of the Malay students in *dakwah* at local campuses. The participation of the informants in local *dakwah* organizations and activities have been identified from the early stage of the resurgence. It was noticeable during that time that students' commitment from the local university, such as University of Malaya has been essential. It started with a small group of students who have a kind of religious consciousness to cooperate and work together and later establish their network with locally and abroad.

"In the early 1970s, a few active associations in University of Malaya, such as PMUM (University of Malaya Students Association) and PMIUM (Muslim Students Association of University of Malaya) as what I remember. I am not an active member of PMUM and PMIUM but I was exposed to students' activities, such as forums." (I1)

"I was President of Islamic Association in my university. I involved in PKPIM and ABIM. I feel that what I want is parallel to IKRAM's vision. That is why I participate in IKRAM." (I3)

"Islamic Resurgence started at some universities. After that religious awareness of the students started to dominate campus politics. Consequently, the identity of Islam became noticeable during that time that female students started wearing hijab or small tudung, like selendang. Even, the culture of greeting (salam), which was quite unusual during that time became common..." (I4).

An important component of the society, and arguably the most active section, are students in institutions of higher learning. As members of the student fraternity, their circumstances enabled them

to establish strong and a variety of networks, locally and internationally. This brings the Islamic Resurgence to a different height.

4.2.3 Witnessing the Impact of Islamic Resurgence on the Malay Middle Class

Most of the informants are witnesses of the impacts of Islamic Resurgence which coloured the religious contour of Malaysian experience. This can be clearly seen from the Islamisation process that took place in the country since 1970s. The contributions of *dakwah* organizations were mushrooming since that time and continuing until now.

Islamic programs had dominated the policies in Malaysia and its impacts could be seen in the various aspects of religious awareness among the public in terms of clothing, attendance to religious programmes and their commitment to religious organizations, public awareness on *halal* food, and the growing number of request for Islamic literature, such as Qur'anic translations and religious reading materials. However, they are also aware of such de-Islamisation progress which exists in the contemporary Malaysian society.

“Since 3 or 4 years ago, there are increasing number of religious classes, especially among the urban residents, because in the rural areas there are limited facilities to these religious phenomena. The Impact of the Islamic Resurgence on the middle class is noticeable.” (I1)

“I think the Islamic Resurgence progress has been gradually taking place since ten to fifteen years ago whereby parents are interested in sending their children to religious schools, particularly the boarding schools.” (I1)

“In the urban areas, the Islamic Resurgence is obvious. But there is also the renaissance of un-Islamic culture.” (I3)

“During that time we don't even have a Malay translation of the Qur'an. Yet, we were exposed to Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation and we used that in our usrahs. In fact, we had been using the translation from Indonesia for quite a long time and no doubt this Qur'an which was printed by the religious Department of Indonesia had impacted our lives tremendously...” (I4)

“There are increasing tangible and intangible outcomes of Islamic awareness in the public. But we must improve our efforts as to optimise the Islamic function in the society at the highest level.” (I5)

The informants reflect on their involvement in Islamic activities from the early stage, and now are able to see the realization of the efforts they sowed earlier. What they witness today are fruits of their struggle and perseverance. It could be seen that it took decades to change and mould the society towards understanding Islam and there must be continuous effort to ensure its sustainability.

4.2.4 Participating in the Local and Foreign Islamic Dakwah Activities

Most of the informants, if not all, are actively involved in Islamic and *dakwah* activities, be it at the local or international level. Most of them engage in the *dakwah* and Islamic-based civil society movements, while some of them are active participants in the Islamic-based political party. Some of the informants who have been appointed as the key masterminds who plan and initiate the *dakwah* activities as well as strategize the work plans for the organizations.

The third informant for example, was appointed important positions as spokesman and the founding committee of Islamic Representative Council in an organization which is located and executed abroad. He was also appointed among the first forty of the National Technology Institute's (or *Institut Teknologi Kebangsaan* - ITK students who attended the *Dakwah Leadership Training (Latihan Kader Dakwah - LDK)*. The fourth informant was a founding member of ABIM while the first informant is committee member of an Islamic-based party at the branch level. Their contributions and commitments are well recognized by such organizations, like Islamic Representative Council of the United Kingdom and IKRAM, ABIM and PAS; and a worldwide Islamic movement, such as Jamaah Tablighi.

"Currently, I am a committee member of a political party in the area where I stay." (I1)

"I want to propagate the religion. I see that there is no reason why I should not support Islamic dakwah." (I2)

"When I was studying abroad, I was invited to the launching ceremony of IRC and I was representing Islamic student association of my university. When I returned home, I see IKRAM and JIM's missions are similar to what I planned". (I3)

"I was exco of student association at that time. In 1991-1974, I was an active leader of student association, such as The National Association of Muslim Students Malaysia, known as Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia (PKPIM), and Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia- ABIM). I was also a representative of international Islamic student organization." (I4)

"Actually, I was involved in many Islamic organizations (jamaah), but Jamaah Tablighi has changed my worldview which I could see things from different perspectives, embarked field work and participated in dakwah overseas. So, Jamaah Tablighi has created us to be husnuz zon (a positive person towards others)". (I5)

Through their international stints in universities abroad, most informants had a chance to get involve in global *dakwah* activities. This gives them the right exposure and training ground to enhance their leadership skills in pursuing their *dakwah* activities. When they returned to their home ground, they were able to significantly engage more people and contribute to the proliferation of *dakwah* activities in the community.

4.2.5 Concern with the State's Policy on Islamisation

Most of the informants are concerned with rapid changes on Islamisation progress in Malaysia, particularly, Islamisation policy in the public sectors, banking system, legal institution and education. They agreed that the government initiates to uphold the function of Islam in internal and foreign policies helps to upsurge Islamisation process in the society. This Islamic policy encourage to synergise Islamic activities by the public and private agencies, the mass media, the mosques and *musollas* (small prayer room), shopping complexes, and public areas. Nevertheless, from their point of views, such endeavours by the political will of the state government are not enough without full commitment of the political party leadership, the support of the community leadership (at the lower level) and participation of the NGOs.

Findings of the study showed that the Malay middle income class in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur have demonstrated their commitment and dedication to the teachings of Islam in many forms and this trend is attributed by several factors. Most of these middle income class engage in the *dakwah* and Islamic-based social movements or NGOs, while some of them are active participants in the Islamic-based political party.

The study showed that Islamic awareness among the Malay middle income class has been demonstrated through their sincere convictions in Islamic belief and practices. Their commitments on Islamic teaching has contributed by self-awareness and responsibility, believing in Islam as the way of life, personal attachment with Islamic *dakwah* organizations and institutions, as well as engaging life-long mission with their organizations. The Islamic awareness on the fundamental belief of Islam and the religious commitments among the Malay middle income class are of manifestations and characteristics of the Islamic Resurgence that is consistent with Esposito's (1995) writing. The Malays reactions towards the Islamic Resurgence are also to reaffirm Islam in their life. These findings are also in line with Huntington's (1996) observations on the emergence of the middle class in the Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia.

In general, Islamic Resurgence has delivered positive impacts on the Malay middle income class' religious practices and commitments. Clearly, the Islamic Resurgence contributes to the emergence of the great number of moderate Muslims and the development of Islam in Malaysia. The findings of this study are in line with Ahmad Sunawari's (2010) outcomes which look at the significant role and contribution of the Malay middle income class in the development of moderate Islam within the Islamic world.

5. Conclusion

Following the endeavours to upsurge Islamic Resurgence in 1970s, most of the *dakwah* programs and activities have been centralized around the circle of urban areas of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. This religious resurgence does influence the Malay middle income class who reside and work within the adjacent areas of the two states.

The Malay middle income class in the study show high commitment in religion which can be seen through their participation in the religious and *dakwah* activities. Their commitment in religion which can be perceived through their thoughts about the role of religion in their life and the current issues pertaining Islam in the modern age. Most of the Malay middle income class regard themselves not just as a devout Muslim, but also a faithful believer. They show their dedication and keenness in religious practices and obligations. They complete the compulsory religious obligations, such as fulfilling five times daily prayers, improving their optional practices and trying their best efforts to practise Islam.

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