INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

1.0.   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, definition of the title, delimitation of the research, methodology, significance of the research, literature review, and the structure of the study are discussed.

1.1.   BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In general, the word 'feminism' is associated with women who act, talk and write about women's issues and rights. They identify what they believe as the existence of inequalities between the sexes in a community.[1]

The word feminism itself first appeared in France in the 1880s, Great Britain in the 1890s, and then was used in the United States in 1910.[2]

Although issues that interest feminisms are varied, they strongly oppose social injustice in any community. They believe in the importance of analyzing and understanding gender differences by adding their own perspective in the goal to remove inequalities.[3]

Research has recorded three "waves" of feminist movement. The first wave of feminism that occurred in the 19th to early 20th centuries dealt mainly with the Suffrage movement that emerged at the end of the 19th century. They were concerned with women's right to vote. A second wave that took place from the 1960s up to the 1990s saw feminists fighting for legal equality as they believed that the civil law discriminated women. They wanted to ensure greater legal and basic human rights for women. The

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[1] Neeru Tandon, *Feminism: a Paradigm Shift* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors (P) LTD, 2008), 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1.
[3] Susan Mollen Okin and Jane Mansbridge, *Feminism* (England: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1994), ix.

third wave of feminism arose in the 1990s where they continued their struggle on gender equality after the failure of the second wave movement.[4]

Feminism, which started as a movement for women's liberation is not of recent origin.[5] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the French dramatist Alexander Dumas was the first person who coined the term 'Feminism' in 1872. According to Neeru Tendon, *"The term feminism is originated from the French. It is the combination word for woman, femme, and isme which referred to a social movement or political ideology."*[6]

Barbara Berg gave the definition of feminism in her Introduction to *The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism* as a *"broad movement embracing numerous phases of women's emancipation"*. According to Berg, there are many kinds of freedom that women can achieve through the ideas of feminism such as the freedom to self-determination, freedom from prescribed sex roles, freedom from injustice regulations of society, freedom to show her whole ideas and freedom to practice their ideas. Feminism is the movement that struggle for women's freedom. They believe that women are discriminated because of their sex hence there is a need to free women from all types of injustice. A feminist is a woman who identifies herself as a feminist and the others also identify her as a feminist.[7]

The word 'feminist' was also attributed to Charles Fourier, a French socialist, in the beginning of the 19th century.[8]

Feminism issues have not only become popular in the Western countries, its ideology is also spread to the Muslim world, where greater emphasis on gender issues is placed. They debated with the idea of women's freedom; they were convinced that

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[4] Neeru Tandon, *Feminism*, 1.
[5] Abdul Rahman I. Doi, and Abdalhaqq Bewley, *Woman in Shari'ah (Islamic Law)* (t.tp.: Ta-Ha, 1989), 169.
[6] Neeru Tandon, *Feminism*, 26.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*

Muslim women have limited freedom as compared to men. Feminists believe that the Muslim women should struggle to claim their rights.[9]

However some Egyptian, Turkish, Iranian, Syrian and Lebanese women and men were exposed to European feminist magazines even a decade earlier. In the general press, they discussed whether the feminism ideology can be applied to societies in the Middle-east or not.[10]

Most of Muslim feminist movements believe that it was not Islam that oppressed women rather it was the male-centered interpretations of the Islamic sources that discriminate the opposite sex. They claimed that this happened because of the influences of the cultural practices and values of a patriarchal society. They claimed that the realities of women have been largely silent in the interpretation of the Islamic sources. They also disputed over the male's interpretations of the Qur'an, whilst bringing with them an alternative interpretation from a woman's perspective (in relation to the Western version).[11]

A feminist journal *Zanan* (Women) was founded in1992 is proof that there are voices from the Muslim feminists in Iran. This journal offers a new method of interpretations of Islam which they claimed will interpret the text fairly and without discrimination. It also called for equality between genders in terms of human rights. The goal of the journalist is to encourage women to be aware of their rights, proclaim it and then bring about a change to the society.[12]

Feminism does not only appear in the Middle-east countries, but was also spread to the other parts of the Muslim regions including the South-east Asia. Several South-east Asian Muslim women's groups play an active role in the current debates on the

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[9] Siti Muslikhati, *Feminism dan Pemberdayaan Perempuan dalam Timbangan Islam* (Indonesia: Gema Insani, 2004), 46.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Sylva Frisk, *Submitting to God: Women and Islam in Urban Malaysia* (Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asean Studies (NIAS Press), 2009), 183.
[12] *Ibid.*

definition of the role of women's social, cultural, legal, and economy in their modern societies. They claimed that they seek to find the teachings of the al-Qur'an to be applied to present-day context that are grounded on the idea of the universal equality of human beings in Islam. Groups of Muslim women led a re-examination of traditional Islamic sources for answers to these complex questions.[13]

One of the South-east Asia countries includes Malaysia who has a prominent women's group struggling for equality between genders. This group is called the Sisters In Islam (SIS) who has been active in publishing writings and organizing seminars on this matter.[14]

The founding of SIS is traced to a certain law they were dissatisfied with when there was an implementation of new Islamic Family Laws that had been legislated in 1984. In 1987, a group of women were not satisfied with certain law of this new Islamic Law when it was enforced in Shariah courts. They claimed that some existing laws which are implemented in the Shariah court in Malaysia are biased and discriminatory against Muslim women. It seemed to them that some Muslim women are oppressed by men or their husbands. They then suggested that some existing law in the Shariah court be reformed to ensure that the rights of Muslim women are protected under the law. [15]

There are eight women in this organization that make up the core of what was to become Sisters In Islam by 1989, and they are Amina Wadud, Askiah Adam, Norani Othman, Rashidah Abdullah, Rose Ismail, Salbiah Ahmad, Sharifah Zuriah Aljeffri, and Zainah Anwar.[16]

Aihwa Ong writes about Sisters In Islam that they encouraged women to become aware about equality rights between sexes from an Islamic perspective based on an

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[13] Rashida Khanam, *Muslim Feminism and Feminist movement: South-East Asia* (Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2002), 7.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] Zainah Anwar, and Shanon Shah Mohd Sidik, *Sisters in Islam, Empowering Voices for Change, Annual Review 2006*, ed. Rose Ismail (t.tp.: t.p., t.t.), 2.
[16] *Ibid.*, 4.

Islamic framework through interpretations given by women instead of men. Some Muslim feminists in Malaysia argue that women should be well educated not only in religious matters but also in secular knowledge. Some of them believe that *ijtihād* should be applied by using independent reasoning to interpret the Islamic sources for themselves instead of relying only on male interpretations. According to them, this is an opportunity for women to be involved in public debates over religious matters that affect them and their community's future. They believe that the emphasis on careful reading of the Qur'an and other key Islamic writings allow for a new interpretation to explain religious matters according to the correct meaning without discriminating the women.[17]

SIS's work expanded from focusing on a law reform to encompass larger issues of democracy, human rights and constitutionalism. Presently, the group claims that it holds weekly meetings to study the Qur'an and attempts to find the solution to the problems faced by Muslim women nowadays. They believe that some Family Laws that had been enforced at Shariah court in Malaysia discriminated against Muslim women and cannot solve the problems faced by them. Because of that, its area of study also included other sections of the Qur'anic text that had been used to justify domestic violence, polygamy, women's unquestioning obedience to men, the inferior position of women as witnesses, and gender inequality in general.[18]

SIS believes that Islam does not discriminate against women, but some interpretations of the Qur'an that had been done by man should be reviewed and corrected again. This means that women should be given the opportunity to get involved in the interpretation of the Qur'an so that the perspective of women will be considered too. The

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[17] Andrew Clinton Willford, and Kenneth M. George, *Spirited Politics: Religion and Public Life in Contemporary Southeast Asia* (t.tp.: SEAP Publications, 2005), 109-110.
[18] Zainah, and Shanon, *Sisters In Islam*, 4.

member of this organization who entrusted to lead the task of interpretation is Amina Wadud.[19] In 1992, Amina Wadud-Muhsin began her reinterpretations of the Qur'an.[20]

This group claimed that Amina Wadud and a group of professional women are returning to the text of the Qur'an to understand how the Qur'an defines gender. They searched for tools that were available from within the Islamic tradition for the realization of equality between sexes. Hence, SIS developed various methods to highlight gender injustice and began to develop upon hermeneutical recovery projects. The projects aimed at re-examining the male interpretation monopolies on religious knowledge and gender constructions. This reform of religious knowledge then would be brought to the society through conferences, workshops, legal clinics, and etc. It also offers discussions of religious beliefs and practices. Apart from that, it also has publications ranging from press releases to letters to newspaper editors, legal memoranda, working papers and books. These publications aimed to achieve their target which was the national level. In addition, SIS has not only developed it at the national level, they wanted to reach the international level.[21]

SIS is currently doing research into the Qur'an, *tafsīr* literature, Islamic law, and women's rights. They aimed at ensuring discussions on Islam and women's rights are covered through multiple perspectives and guided by the principles of justice and equality. The group then published two questions-and-answer booklets entitled: "*Are Women & Men Equal Before Allah?*" and "*Are Muslim Men Allowed to Beat Their Wives?*"[22]

SIS did not only deal with family issues, they began to expand their work on larger and global issues such as nation-building, governance, Islamisation, and the challenge of

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[19] *Ibid.*, 4-5.

[20] Sylva, *Submitting to God*, 183.

[21] Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, Zayn Kassam, and Lillian Ashcraft-Eason, *Women and Islam*, (t.tp.: ABCCLIO, 2010), xxi-xxii.

[22] Zainah, and Shanon, *Sisters In Islam*, 7.

change and modernity. To achieve this mission, in 1992, SIS organized its first national conference on The Modern Nation State and Islam, revolving around issues of contemporary relevance to the *Ummah*.[23]

SIS also argued for a law reform where they then submitted its first memorandum to the Government on law reform in 1993 to the then ex-Prime Minister Datuk Seri Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.[24]

SIS furthered their arguments and in 1994, submitted its second memorandum to the Government on Domestic Violence Act. In this memorandum, they argued on religious and legal grounds of how Muslims should not be excluded from the jurisdiction of the proposed law.[25]

By the end of the 1990s, SIS expanded its tasks to include broader issues such as upholding democratic principles and the fundamental liberties guaranteed by the Federal Constitution. They also raised issues of human right principles, international treaties and conventions that were signed by the Malaysian government.[26]

SIS claimed that its explicit aim is to reclaim a social justice agenda within Islam and to promote a more egalitarian interpretation of gender status and rights. SIS has published work on a number of topics concerning women's rights within Islam in general as well as on particular issues, such as gender-bias aspects of Muslim family law.[27]

This organization also looked into human rights and democratic movements in the country. By 1998, SIS finally established an office with permanent staff. Two founding members become co-directors and they are Zainah Anwar and Sharifah Zuriah Aljeffri.[28]

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[23] *Ibid.*, 8.
[24] *Ibid.*, 7.
[25] *Ibid.*, 8.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] Sylva, *Submitting to God*, 183.
[28] Zainah, and Shanon, *Sisters In Islam*, 8-9.

To ensure their opinions and suggestion were made known to the public, SIS began to expand their discussion into public education. In the year 2000, they began work on a training module on women's rights in Islam (according to the understanding of SIS) and revived their original study sessions. In the beginning, these study sessions were open only to Muslim women, but soon they welcomed all men and women, including those of other faiths. SIS also began conducting two-day training programmes on women's rights in Islam that would explain about justice and equality according to what SIS understood.[29] Thereafter, SIS also began its service arm in 2003 by establishing a legal clinic offering legal counselling via email, fax, letters, telephone and face-to-face meetings.[30]

Today, SIS is a registered non-profit company, has organized supporters and volunteers into the Friends of SIS (FOSIS) and includes male associate members. They now operate from a larger office in Petaling Jaya and have several full-time staff, part-time staff and project staff which involve academics from local universities in its research projects.[31]

SIS also regularly consults members and associate members in its work on diverse issues. Several Kuala Lumpur-based members are active in writing letters to newspapers, magazines, etc. In its aim to create and expand public space to debate on women's rights and Islam, SIS also networks with other women's groups and NGOs working on human rights issues.[31]

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[29] *Ibid.*, 9.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*

[31] Geetaniali Misra, and Radhika Chandiramani, *Sexuality, Gender and Rights: Exploring Theory and Practice in South and Southeast Asia* (t.tp.: SAGE, 2005).

SIS has extensively worked with other NGOs, both local and transnational, and is frequently featured in the local media.[32]

This brief background of SIS has attracted the researcher towards the topic of "Method of Problem Solving from Islamic Thought Perspective: A Case Study of Sisters In Islam".

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENTS

The following are the problem statements for this research:

1. What are the objectives of the establishment of Sisters In Islam and how does it play its role as an NGO in championing women's rights to achieve them?

2. What are the methods of problem solving used by this organization to solve the problems?

3. Are the methods of problem solving used by SIS in solving problems accepted by Islam?

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[32] Michael G. Peletz, "Islam and the Cultural Politics of Legitimacy: Malaysia in the Aftermath of September 11," in *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, Robert W. H. (New Jersey:Princeton University Press, 2009), 252.

1.3.   OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study attempts to address a set of research questions. The objectives of the study as follow:

1. To illustrate Sisters In Islam as a women's organisation in struggling for women's rights to achieve its objectives.

2. To analyze the method of problem solving deployed by SIS.

3. To critically evaluate the method of problem solving used by SIS from an Islamic thought perspective

1.4.   DEFINITION

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'method' is found to connote "*a particular way of doing something*"[33]; 'of' means "*concerning*";[35] 'problem' is referred as "*a thing that is difficult to deal with or to understand*";[34] and 'solve' is defined as "*to find a way of dealing with a problem or difficult situation.*"[35] While the word 'problem solving' means "*the act of finding ways of dealing with problems.*"[36] According to the Free Dictionary by Farlex, problem solving means

1. "The area of cognitive psychology that studies the processes involved in solving problem. Cognitive psychology is an approach to psychology that emphasizes internal mental processes."

2. "The thought processes involved in solving problem."

3. "The process involved in finding a solution to a problem."

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[33] *Oxford Advanced Learners's English Dictionary*, 7th ed. (t.tp.:Oxford University Press, t.t.), 925.

[35] *Ibid.*, 1011.

[34] *Ibid.*, 1157.

[35] *Ibid.*, 1404.

[36] *Ibid.*, 1157.

A problem is "*a question or situation that presents doubt, perplexity, or difficulty or a question offered for consideration, discussion, or solutions*" (Webster 1995). According to Karen S. Meador in her book 'Creative thinking and problem solving for young learner', "*the term problem solving applies to a broad scope of problems in all contents area. The procedures for finding solutions to specific problems in each area or field differ significantly in type and method.*"[37]

The researcher concludes that the meaning of 'problem solving' here is the process that involves finding a solution to the question, problem, difficulty, or situation that requires consideration, discussion, or solution.

While, the word 'from' is "*used to show somebody's position or point of view*";[38] the term 'Islamic' is an adjective[39] which means "of Islam, belonging to the Islamic religion"; the word 'thought' is defined as "*ideas*" or "*the process of thinking*" or "*the act of thinking seriously and carefully about something*";[40] and the word perspective means "*viewpoint.*"[41]

Here, the researcher concludes that the combination of the term 'Islamic thought perspective' means from an Islamic viewpoint that is based on the Qur'an and Hadith. The stand point should not be contradiction with the Islamic sources.

While 'a Case Study' means "*a detailed account of the development of a group of people*"[44] and 'Sisters' is defined as "*a girl or woman who has the same mother and father as another person*" or "*used for talking to or about other members of a women's organization.*"[42]

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[37] Karen S. Meador, *Creative Thinking and Problem Solving for Young Learners* (t.tp.: Libraries Unlimited, 1997), 69, 71.
[38] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 599.
[39] *Ibid.* , 791.
[40] *Ibid.*, 1540.
[41] *Ibid.*, 1085.
[44] *Ibid.*, 218.
[42] *Ibid.*, 1373.

According to Hammudah Abd al-Ati, the word literal meaning of Islam "*is derived from the Arabic root "SLM" which means, other things indicated, peace, purity, submission and obedience.*" While technically according to him "*the word Islam means submission to the Will of Allah and obedience to His Law.*" Here it can be seen that the literal and the technical meanings of the word Islam have a relationship to each other. It means that one can get the true peace only through his submission to the Will of Allah s.w.t. and by obedience to His Law.[43]

But, the term 'Sisters in Islam' in this study refers to those who claim themselves as members of the Sisters In Islam organization.

In general, the researcher can summarise the definition of "Method of Problem Solving from Islamic Thought Perspective: a Case Study of Sisters In Islam" in this research is the analytical study that is conducted by using three main kinds of sources, primary, secondary and tertiary sources of literature. All these sources will need to be reviewed. The methods of problem solving which are used by SIS will be explored from an Islamic thought perspective by looking at the primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. Various other references would be helpful to get overview of the general principles of acceptable methods of problem solving in Islam.

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[43] Hammudah Abd al-Ati, *Islam in Focus,* 2nd ed. (t.tp.: Islamic Books, t.t.), 20.

1.5.   SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

With regards to the delimitation of the study, the research focuses on the general principles of the method of problem solving through Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr*) and *ijtihād*. The research concentrates on Sisters In Islam and their method of problem solving through a model of Qur'anic hermeneutics. The study also focuses on the method of problem solving through *ijtihād* as interpreted by SIS. Since among the matters SIS focuses on are those that are related to Islamic Family Law, a few issues connected to this field are chosen as the subject of analysis. The research looks into issues relating to *ṭalāq*, *ta'līq*, *khul'* and *fasakh*. Other issues that will be discussed are related to the women's *'awrah* and enforcing public morality. Both are among the primary topics highlighted in SIS' website. The general principles of the method of problem solving as determined by renowned Muslim scholars in their respective fields were used as a tool to analyse the method of problem solving by SIS, followed by an analysis from the Islamic thought perspective.

1.6.   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There are many ideologies and ways of thinking spread across Muslim societies and it is vital to recognise and analyse those ideologies from the Islamic thought perspective to verify them. In Malaysia, many organisations offer solutions to problems in society, and one of them is Sisters In Islam. Sisters In Islam has been chosen as a case study because this organisation claims that they offer alternative solutions within the framework of Islam. However at the same time, this group has been labelled as feminist, liberal, and western-influenced by those who disagree with their ideologies and opinions, claiming that SIS provides solutions that contradict with Islamic thought perspectives.

SIS is one of the organisations in Malaysia that offer alternative solutions for the Muslim society by applying their own methods of problem solving. Therefore, it is essential to analyse their methods of problem solving from the Islamic thought perspective. The significance of this study is to analyse whether the method of problem solving used by SIS can be accepted or rejected from Islamic thought perspective.

This study will benefit the Muslim society because the findings of this study will reveal to the society the methods of problem solving used by SIS. It will determine whether their methods of problem solving fulfill the requirements of the general principles of acceptable methods of problem solving from Islamic thought perspective. Since the method of problem solving in Islam is significant to ensure the given solution does not contradict with Islam, this study will help Muslims in selecting the correct solutions from those who apply the acceptable methods of problem solving as determined by renowned Muslim scholars.

This will also help create awareness among Muslims about the importance of understanding the proper method of problem solving in Islam and how to obtain the best solution to problems according to the Islamic thought perspective. This study is imperative for ensuring the proper methods of problem solving are applied by any group who wishes to offer solutions to the society to prevent the misinterpretation of Islamic sources or the misunderstanding of Islamic teachings.

1.7.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on theses reviewing at libraries in International Islamic University Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia and Universiti Sains Malaysia, the researcher finds that no thesis has been written specifically about the method of problem solving used by Sisters In Islam from Islamic thought perspective either from the master or PhD level. Writings at the degree level do exist but are discussed in general.

There are theses written at master level regarding to Sisters In Islam:

i.   Siti Hilmiyah binti Mohamad Raf'ii, *Sisters in Islam dan Pelaksanaan Khidmat Nasihat Terhadap Isu-isu Wanita,* master thesis, UKM, 2012.

ii.   Mohd Fu`ad bin Mohamad Seleh, *Metodologi tafsiran dan terjemahan ayat al-Quran oleh Sisters In Islam (SIS) dan Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL) :perbandingannya dengan ulama tafsir*, master thesis, Sarjana Pengajian Islam, Fakulti Pengajian Islam, UKM, 2010.

There are articles written about SIS in journals and they are:

i.   Sisters In Islam's Quest for the Reinterpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith: an Analysis of Their Views on Equality, Women Judges, and Polygamy[44] by Abdussalam Muhammad Shukri[45] and Musa Yusuf Owoyemi.[46]

ii.   Sisters in Islam: Feminisme atau Liberalisme? by Mohd Farid Mohd Sharif & Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir.[47]

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[44] This article was published by Universiti Sains Malaysia Press**:** Kajian Malaysia (Vol. 32, No.1, 2014, 55–80), Journal of Malaysian Studies.

[45] Department of Usuluddin and Comparative Religion, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage, International Islamic University Malaysia, Jalan Gombak, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

[46] Centre for General Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia.

[47] Jurnal Pemikir, Bil. 59, 2010, 123-135.

There are theses written at degree and master level that may be related:

i. Fatimah Syarha Mohd Noordinal, *Musāwah bayna al-Rajul wa al-Mar'ah fī Fikr al-Munazzamāt al-Nasawiyah fī al-Ḥarakat al-Unthawiyah, al-akhawāt fī al-Islam bi-Maliziya Namūdhajan: Dirāsah Taḥliliyyah Naqdiyyah fī ḍaw' alFiqh al-Islam*, master thesis, department Al-Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh, Kuliyyah of IRKHS, IIUM, 2010.

ii. Siti Suraida binti Sidik, *Al-Musāwah bayna al-Rajul wa al-Mar'ah 'inda Jam'yat "al-Akhawāt fī al-Islam" fī Maliziya: Dirāsah min al-Manẓūr al-Qur'āni,* master thesis, Department Al-Qur'an and Al-Sunnah, Kuliyyah of IRKHS, IIUM, 2007.

iii. Isma'il Ja'far, *Al-Maṣlaḥah al-Mursalah fī al-Qaḍāyā al-Mu'āṣirah: Dirāsah fī al-Fatwā allatī aṣdaruhā "Majlis Fatwa Kebangsaan*", Academic project (B.A.)--Fakulti Syariah & Kehakiman, USIM, 2003/2004.

In view that some writers label Sisters In Islam as liberal, here are several related readings that concern it. Their issues are about "*Jaringan Islam Liberal*" in Indonesia. The theses and journals that relate to Islam liberal in Indonesia include:

i. The writings of Indonesia "Liberals" on *maṣlaḥah* related to female personal affairs: An *Uṣūlī* Critique by Mardiyah Khairani. This dissertation was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh), Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (November 2008). This research presents a critical analysis of the concept and applications of *maṣlaḥah* as proposed by Indonesian liberal. It also highlights the general differences in definition and applications of *maṣlaḥah* between Muslim scholars and Indonesian liberal. The study also explores discourse on reconstruction of women *Fiqh* in the domain of Islamic family law in the form of Counter Legal Draft-*Kompilasi Hukum Islam* (CLDKHI) which is

propagated by Indonesian liberal. This research uses both critical and analytical methodologies. The result of this study indicates that there are obvious differences on the definition and applications of *maṣlaḥah*, as well as the concept of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as stated by Muslim scholars and Indonesian liberal. The writer also explored the methodology used by both groups, however she did not discuss deeply about the sources and methodologies that were used by Islam liberals in Indonesia. She failed to discuss the issues in detail.

ii. Another thesis written on Islam Liberal was by a Universiti Malaya postgraduate student entitled: "*Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL): Kajian Terhadap Sumber Epistemologi*" by Ahmad Yumni Abu Bakar. Although the writer conducted research on the sources of epistemology, it was not about problem solving.

From Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, there were a few theses and journals that are related to Islam Liberal in Indonesia and they are:

i. *Al-Dakhil Kentemporari dalam Tafsir al Qur'an: Kajian Kritik Terhadap Penyelewengan Penafsiran oleh Jaringan Islam Liberal di Indonesia.*

ii. *Tafsir Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL): Satu Kajian Analisis Metodogi dan Penyelewengan Tafsir JIL Indonesia* by Muhibudin Hasan.

Most books written about Islam Liberal focused on Islam Liberal in Indonesia, for example: *Al-Islam wal fikr al-liberali fi Indonesia* by Sohirin Muhammad Solihin and *Emergence and Development of Liberal Islam in Indonesia – A Critical Evaluation* by Sohirin Muhammad Solihin.

There are several journals written about Islam liberal in Malaysia and Indonesia:

i. Mazlan Ibrahim, and Latifah Abdul Majid, and Jaffary Awang, and Muhd Najib Abdul Kadir, and Fadlan Mohd Othman, *Pengajian Islam di IPT Malaysia dalam menangani Islam Liberal,* Jurnal Hadhari, 5 (1). pp. 37-53, UKM, 2013.

ii. Mohd Fairuz Jamaluddin, and Latifah Abdul Majid, *Persepsi pelajar-pelajar pengajian Islam IPTS terhadap isu-isu fahaman Islam Liberal,* Jurnal Hadhari, 5 (1). pp. 1-19, UKM, 2013.

iii. Azalina Tatar, and Latifah Abdul Majid, *Kefahaman wanita Islam kelas menengah di Lembah Klang terhadap Islam liberal,* Islamiyyat: Jurnal Antarabangsa Pengajian Islam; International Journal of Islamic Studies, 34 . pp. 13-25, UKM, 2012.

iv. Muhd Najib Abdul Kadir; Muhibudin Hassan and Mazlan Ibrahim, *Tafsiran Quran dalam perspektif JIL,* UKM, 2007.

In exploring writings on SIS, some writers label Sisters In Islam as Islam Liberal, pluralistic, Feminist which are negative in nature. On the other hand, there do exist some writers who support and affirm their ideas but it is done without basing their views on a proper study. Through this study, the researcher will conduct an unbiased and academic view in order to uncover who they really are, how they offer solutions to problems and also to know whether their methods of problem solving are acceptable or not acceptable in Islam.

It appears that there is no research at the PhD level written specifically about the method of problem solving by SIS. Therefore this study will be a contributing research in the area and aims to complement previous studies of the organisation.

So, it is hoped that this research can give a big contribution to the society and at the same time also can give very benefit information to the society especially whenever they are offered problem solving and solution by any organization. This is to ensure that problems solving and solution offered by any organization are in line with the Qur'an and *Sunnah* and which will be recognized and accepted by the *Ummah*.

1.8. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The methods used in this study are:

1. Library research.

To complete this research, the researcher has adopted the method of library research which involves primary and secondary data and they are:

i.   Content Analysis

ii.   Data Analysis Method

iii.   Data Gathering Method

iv.   Comparative Analysis

The data will be acquired from books, journals, articles and dictionaries. The data will be acquired from several libraries.

2. Field work: [guided] interviews, evaluation and analysis

The interview is conducted to verify and support the data gathered. It is important to note that the analysis of the data is not solely based on the interview.

Since the study is descriptive in nature, the method used to interpret the qualitative data is content analysis, which Wallen and Fraenkel describe as "*analysis of the written text or visual contents of a document. The conscious and unconscious beliefs, attitudes and values, and ideas of people or groups are often revealed….*" Content analysis is also defined as "*making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within text*"

Data analysis is qualitative research is an on-going process since the data are not pre-structured with a pre-figured design. The research which is unfolding will let things unfold or emerge as the study progresses. Travers considers the vital role of content or textual analysis in research work by emphasizing the fact that qualitative researcher has always known that one can learn a lot about the world by looking at documents. It is

worth noting that texts of all kinds form an important part of everyday life; one can learn a great deal about the people, culture, values, beliefs and numerous other aspects of human life.

The researcher will collect data (data gathering) through reviewing books, articles on the World Wide Web, and attending intellectual discourse or seminar.

Since the researcher focuses more on specific group of people i.e. Sisters in Islam, the researcher will conduct interviews with members of the organization, and its executive directors. Related materials such as books, project papers, pamphlets, journals and document on the method used by Sisters in Islam will be collected. The information gathered will be evaluated in order to make an analysis on the methods that had been used by SIS in solving problems that arose in the society.

For the purpose of the analytical study, the three main kinds of sources (primary, secondary and tertiary sources of literature) will be reviewed. Since the researcher is dealing from Islamic thought perspective, the methods of problem solving used by SIS will be examined from the light of the Qur'an and Hadith. In order to get an overview of the general principles of acceptable methods of problem solving from Islamic thought perspective, various references will also be used. The Qur'an as a primary source and Hadith will be used to understand the methods to authenticate whether SIS's methods are acceptable or not in Islam.

After the data is analyzed, the researcher will do a comparative analysis between the methods of problem solving used by Sisters in Islam to solve the problems and the methods of problem solving that have been used by Muslim scholars from *Ahl al-Sunnah Wal Jamā'ah*.

1.9. ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The theses will be organised into seven chapters:

Chapter 1

This is the introduction part which looks into the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, definition of the title, delimitation of the research, methodology, significance of the research, literature review, and the structure of the study.

Chapter 2

This chapter presents the background of the establishment of Sisters In Islam, its founding members, its purpose of establishment, their activities and programmes.

Chapter 3

This chapter brings into discussion the method of problem solving through Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr*). This chapter begins with an elaboration of the problems that arise in society as claimed by SIS. After which, the general principles of the method of problem solving through the Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr*) are discussed. Following that, this chapter also discusses the qualifications required of a *mufassir*. This chapter further clarifies the method of problem solving applied by SIS through the model of Qur'anic hermeneutics and its analysis from an Islamic thought perspective.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 discusses the method of problem solving through *ijtihād*. This chapter begins with the topic of general principles of the method of problem solving through *ijtihād* from an Islamic context. After which, *ijtihād* as interpreted by SIS is presented, followed by an analysis from an Islamic thought perspective.

Chapter 5

This chapter begins with a review of SIS' perspective on the status of women and their rights. This analysis was done to obtain a better understanding of the issues that are frequently highlighted by SIS in their recommended solutions to prevailing problems in society. Following that, a few issues that are claimed by SIS as discrimination against Muslim women is discussed and their suggested solutions reviewed. After which, an analysis of SIS' commentary on the selected issues is conducted based on the Islamic thought perspective by observing the methods used to solve problems. Since the main focus of SIS is on Islamic family law, a few issues relating to this field were chosen as the subject of analysis. The issues that are analysed in this chapter are related to *ṭalāq*, *ta'līq*, *khul'* and *fasakh*.

Chapter 6

In chapter six, the topic of discussion concerning women is *'awrah* and the topic concerning human rights is the enforcement of public morality. The perspectives and recommended solutions of SIS on these selected issues are presented and an analysis from an Islamic thought perspective was done by observing the methods used to solve problems.

Chapter 7

This chapter will provide the overall conclusion, findings of the study, and several recommendations.