

International Master's Program in International Studies
National Chengchi University
國立政治大學國際研究英語碩士學位學程

**Gender Inequality in Muslim Majority Petro-
States: Implications for Women's Status in
Malaysia**

穆斯林產油國的性別不平等及其對馬來西亞婦女地位之意涵

Jan Juhas

Advisor: Yung-Fang Lin, Ph.D.

June 2018

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Abstract

Admitting the complexity of the issues, some religious norms and traditions together with the inflow of oil revenues might contribute to the subordination of women in the society. This thesis uses qualitative research methods to elaborate the variables influencing the status of women in Muslim majority Petro-states. The extraordinary wealth flowing from mineral and natural resources mixed with Islamist religion can contribute to the formation of gender inequalities in Muslim majority Petro countries. The study is analyzing the effect of oil revenues and Islam on gender inequality in order to answer why women in some of the Muslim oil abundant countries are doing better than in the Middle East and North Africa, where women suffer from highest gender inequality indexes. Research provides a complex analysis of the case of Malaysia, as a country rich in natural resources, having Muslim majority population, but still considered as a relatively gender equal society. The case of Malaysia serves as the counter-argument, proving the existence of counter variables, mitigating the negative influence of oil revenues and Islam religiosity in Malaysia, causing deep gender gaps in countries of MENA. This analysis identifies to what extent oil revenues are causing gender inequality, answering why Malaysia as a Muslim country, rich on natural resources, can enjoy a lower level of gender inequality compared to the Middle East and North African region; in order to identify not quantifiable variables impacting the status of women in Muslim majority countries.

Key Words: Gender inequality, Oil revenues, Islamic Religion, MENA, Malaysia

摘要

大多數石油產出國的社會內都有性別不平等的現象。考慮到問題的複雜性，一些宗教規範和傳統以及石油收入都可能是造成這些國家的婦女社會地位較低的原因。本文採用質性研究方法來闡述影響穆斯林世界中石油產出國的婦女地位之變因。礦產等自然資源帶來的巨大財富以及伊斯蘭教信仰可能是導致穆斯林世界中大多數石油國家性別不平等的因素。中東和北非的性別不平等指數位居全球首位，但是一些盛產石油的穆斯林國家的婦女地位較中東和北非的婦女來得高，本研究分析了石油收入和伊斯蘭教對性別不平等的影響，並針對此現象作一回應。本研究對馬來西亞為例，深入分析自然資源豐富且國內多數人口信奉穆斯林的馬國，是如何被視為一個性別相對平等的社會。馬來西亞的案例是一反論證，造成中東和北非地區性別鴻溝的是產油收入以及伊斯蘭教，不過這兩者在馬國卻沒有明顯的作用。根據研究的分析結果確定了石油收入是造成一定程度上的性別不平等之因，也為自然資源豐富的穆斯林國家——馬來西亞，相較於中東和北非地區，性別不平等程度較低的現象找到解答，藉以確定影響大多數穆斯林國家婦女地位非量化的變因。

關鍵字：性別不平等、石油收入、伊斯蘭地區、中東及北非、馬來西亞

Chapter 1. Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as region with highest number of Muslim majority countries holding over half of the world oil resources is a very extraordinary example where enormous wealth flowing from mineral and natural resources failed to bring the expected socio-economic development, closing the tremendously deep gender gap. However, there are successful stories of countries which are oil abundant Muslim majority, where women can enjoy relatively gender equal status in comparison to men as case of Malaysia is proving.

Women represent half of the world population; therefore, from pragmatic point of view, they possessed with strong labour and economic power, which could be a highly beneficial contributor in order to lift many countries above the poverty and underdevelopment line, yet there are still not integrated fully into value creation process.¹ Bringing women into the workplace should not only improve women empowerment, but according World Economic Forum, it should significantly contribute into the world economy, causing domino effect of positive developments, which can be applied not only inside of MENA, but also in the other Muslim majority Petro-states and other economically underdeveloped countries.² The recent report “Women, Work and the Economy,” reveals that closing gender gaps in the labour market would raise GDP in the United States by 5 percent, in the United Arab Emirates by 12 percent, and in Egypt by 34 percent.³

¹ Paul Saba, “Women Hold Up Half the Sky”

² World Economic Forum, “Why gender equality makes business sense,” *WEF*, (January 20, 2016), Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/why-gender-equality-makes-business-sense/>

³ Devex, “How gender equality can boost economic growth,” *Devex* (October 21, 2013), Available at: <https://www.devex.com/news/sponsored/how-gender-equality-can-boost-economic-growth-82130>

This thesis can further serve as to call for action for governments to strike gender inequality in order to not only close the gender gaps in the society, but also boost economic performance of the countries suffering from highest gender inequality indexes to diversify their economies and provide infrastructure for both genders equally, reducing massive gender gaps by creating more economic opportunities for women. Therefore, knowing the causes of gender inequality could lead to proper policy implication to not only improve women's status in the society, but bringing many improvements with itself.

1.1 Research Motivation and Purpose

Common sense would predict that the possession of one of the greatest oil reserves in the world will make the region one of the most developed, not only politico-economically, but also socio-economically. This logic of development should be progressing towards higher levels of gender equality as it happened in Western countries, where economic development provided opportunities for women to work, serving as important leverage for women's status as improvement in the society. However, the opposite is a reality, in many states in the Middle East and North Africa, the oil did not bring the expected socio-economic development; unfortunately, the regions' stereotypes of underdevelopment, poverty and highest levels of gender inequalities still prevail. Therefore, the main focus of following chapter of this thesis is to evaluate the role of oil and Islamist religion as variables responsible for keeping dexterously deep gender gap in Muslim majority Petro-states.

Muslim majority Petro states are stereotypically composed out of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries; however, on the other hand, there are countries of Kazakhstan, Brunei, and Malaysia, which are labelled as Muslim majority countries as well, possessing with enough of oil reserves, adding them into focus group of Muslim majority

Petro states. Although, the negative forces of oil revenues and Islamist religiosity are having supposedly different consequences on gender inequality index in MENA region and outside of this region. The main puzzle of this thesis is to examine why women in Malaysia can enjoy higher gender status compared to women living in MENA region.

Table 1.1 Muslim majority Petro states – Oil Income per Capita Ranking 2010

majority Muslim petro states according oil income per capita located outside of MENA

1. Qatar	7. Oman	13. MALAYSIA
2. Kuwait	8. Kazakhstan	14. Syria
3. United Arab Emirates	9. Iraq	15. Nigeria
4. Brunei	10. Bahrain	16. Yemen
5. Saudi Arabia	11. Algeria	17. Egypt
6. Libya	12. Iran	18. Indonesia

Source: World Bank, “Oil Income per Capita (% of GDP),” *The World Bank* (Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PETR.RT.ZS>)

A woman living in one of MENA countries has a high chance to suffer from the highest index of gender inequality in comparison to other Muslim or non-Muslim countries outside of the region. As the latest World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Report indicated, that from the bottom of 25 countries marked as the worst in gender equality index around the world, 16 of them are from Muslim majority MENA region.⁴ The Report’s the highest possible score is 1 (equality) and the lowest possible score is 0 (inequality). The best country

⁴ World Economic Report, “The Global Gender Gap Report 2016,” WEF, (2016), Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR16/WEF_Global_Gender_Gap_Report_2016.pdf

performing in 2016 was Iceland (0.874), Malaysia ranked 106th (0.666) before Japan (111th) and South Korea (116th).⁵

Table 1.2 Gender Inequality Index 2016 – The bottom countries out of 144 countries

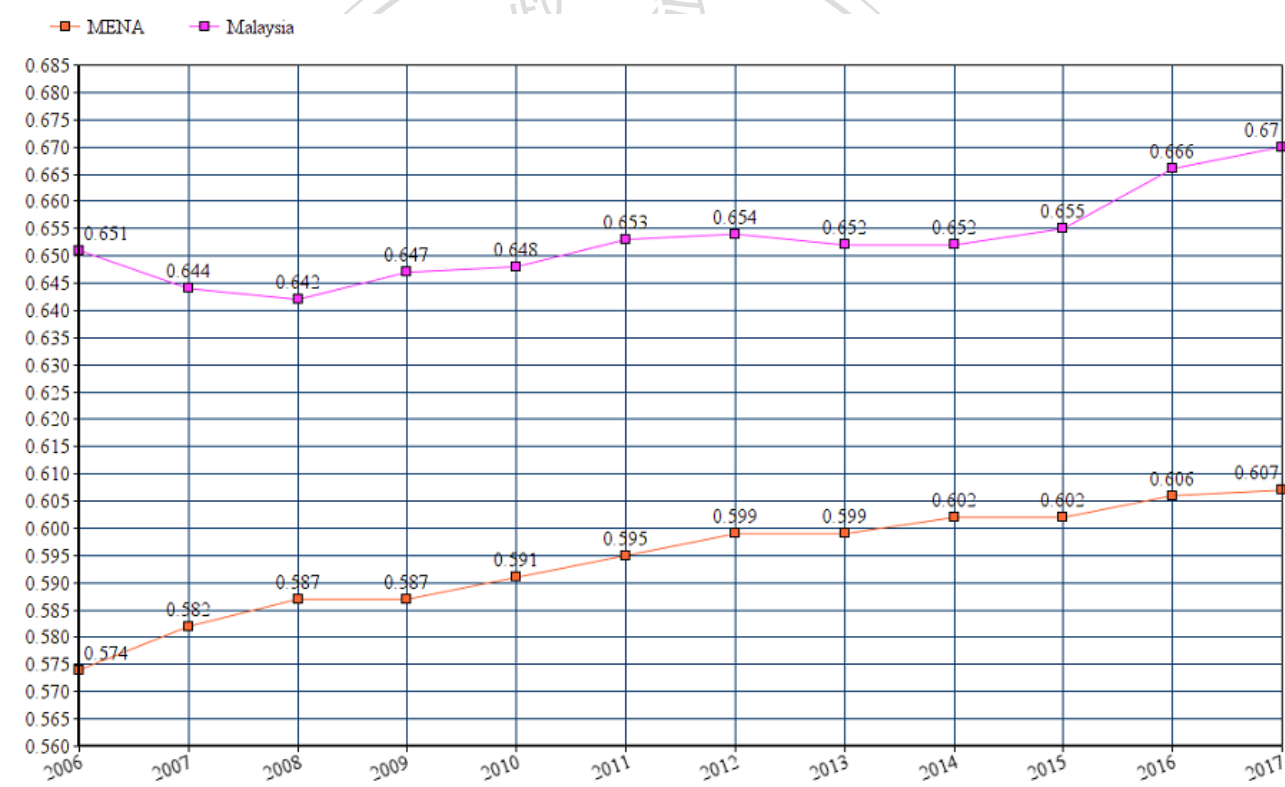
Country	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Iceland	1	0.874	9	0.806	1	1.000	104	0.970	1	0.719
Malaysia	106	0.666	80	0.658	89	0.985	109	0.969	134	0.051
Swaziland	107	0.665	109	0.595	46	0.997	132	0.961	100	0.109
Malta	108	0.664	108	0.595	111	0.953	107	0.970	82	0.140
Ethiopia	109	0.662	106	0.599	132	0.840	57	0.978	45	0.231
Nepal	110	0.661	115	0.578	123	0.918	92	0.972	68	0.175
Japan	111	0.660	118	0.569	76	0.990	40	0.979	103	0.103
Cambodia	112	0.658	77	0.659	128	0.897	1	0.980	108	0.098
Mauritius	113	0.652	121	0.550	71	0.991	1	0.980	116	0.087
Liberia	114	0.652	103	0.612	137	0.797	118	0.967	46	0.230
Maldives	115	0.650	112	0.590	81	0.988	129	0.966	133	0.055
Korea, Rep.	116	0.649	123	0.537	102	0.964	76	0.973	92	0.120
Angola	117	0.643	120	0.565	138	0.778	1	0.980	40	0.251
Nigeria	118	0.643	52	0.700	134	0.814	135	0.961	109	0.097
Qatar	119	0.643	97	0.619	92	0.982	136	0.957	144	0.013
Algeria	120	0.642	134	0.435	104	0.962	127	0.966	56	0.205
Bhutan	121	0.642	99	0.619	121	0.925	125	0.966	132	0.056
Guinea	122	0.640	29	0.745	142	0.718	115	0.967	88	0.130
Burkina Faso	123	0.640	44	0.714	136	0.809	116	0.967	127	0.068
United Arab Emirates	124	0.639	130	0.456	32	1.000	132	0.961	83	0.139
Timor-Leste*	125	0.637	137	0.406	117	0.941	96	0.971	47	0.229
Tunisia	126	0.636	131	0.444	106	0.960	110	0.969	71	0.170
Benin	127	0.636	14	0.795	143	0.712	116	0.967	128	0.067
Kuwait	128	0.624	125	0.520	47	0.997	136	0.957	140	0.022
Mauritania	129	0.624	128	0.469	131	0.858	85	0.973	59	0.195
Turkey	130	0.623	129	0.464	109	0.958	1	0.980	113	0.090
Bahrain	131	0.615	127	0.475	84	0.987	132	0.961	137	0.037
Egypt	132	0.614	132	0.444	112	0.952	95	0.971	115	0.087
Oman	133	0.612	126	0.483	97	0.973	99	0.971	142	0.021
Jordan	134	0.603	138	0.381	64	0.993	131	0.966	123	0.073
Lebanon	135	0.598	133	0.440	108	0.959	102	0.970	143	0.021
Côte d'Ivoire	136	0.597	116	0.575	139	0.764	112	0.968	120	0.081
Morocco	137	0.597	139	0.380	122	0.925	93	0.971	98	0.110
Mali	138	0.591	110	0.594	140	0.733	140	0.949	117	0.086
Iran, Islamic Rep.	139	0.587	140	0.357	94	0.975	98	0.971	136	0.047
Chad	140	0.587	74	0.667	144	0.618	111	0.968	111	0.093
Saudi Arabia	141	0.583	142	0.328	105	0.961	128	0.966	121	0.077
Syria	142	0.567	144	0.273	103	0.963	101	0.970	130	0.063
Pakistan	143	0.556	143	0.320	135	0.811	124	0.967	90	0.127
Yemen	144	0.516	141	0.352	141	0.720	122	0.967	139	0.026

Source: World Economic Forum, “The Global Gender Gap Report – Rankings 2016,” The World Economic Forum, Available at: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/>

⁵ World Economic Report, “The Global Gender Gap Report 2016,” WEF, (2016), Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR16/WEF_Global_Gender_Gap_Report_2016.pdf

Due to slight improvement of MENA's gender inequality index, they still ranks at the bottom against the other regions across the globe. However, on educational attainment countries located inside of MENA are doing better compared to South Asia, but the region ranks the lowest on women's economic and political participation.⁶ Malaysia fully closed its gender gap in educational attainment, but also experienced only slight improvement of women's status comparable with MENA region, as visible on figure 1.1 indicating gender inequality development over one decade in Malaysia and average index of MENA region.⁷

Figure 1.1 Development of Gender Inequality Index in Malaysia and MENA



Source: own graph based on variables retrieved from World Economic Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Report – Rankings from 2006 – 2017," The World Economic Forum, Available at: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/>

⁶ World Economic Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Report – Rankings 2016," Available at: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/>

⁷ Ibid.

Defining the effects of oil revenues and Islam religiosity on women's status will initially help this thesis to understand, why do some oil abundant Muslim majority states suffer from worst gender inequality rates, while the other countries are doing relatively better. Malaysia will serve as a counter-argument to explore mitigating variables, which are reducing negative consequences of oil revenues and Islamist religion.

As Literature review suggests a high correlation of both, Islam religiosity and oil dependency on gender inequality index, directly affecting women's status in majority Muslim Petro-states. Thus, this thesis also analyses the variables mitigating negative consequences of oil and religion in case of Malaysia, which are making Malaysian women relatively more gender equal. Malaysia poses with significant reserves of crude oil, where women are relatively equal to their male counterparts based on gender equality index, bringing up the question, why Malaysian Muslim women are more empowered than their Muslim sisters living in MENA region? What are the variables allowing Malaysian women to be relatively more gender equal compared to women from MENA region?

Why the enormous wealth coming from oil revenues did not bring gender improvements? Can wealth coming from oil resources be responsible for this phenomenon of the deep gender gap? All these questions are important to be elaborated before turning to the main research question why do some oil abundant Muslim countries empower their women, while others do not; allowing us to examine variables which have mitigating power to counter role of oil and Islamist religiosity outside of MENA region.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Paradoxically, the MENA region, possessing the largest commercial quantities of crude oil, turned out to be a region with the highest gender inequality index across the globe.⁸ On the other hand, incoming wealth from natural resources did not bring positive fortune for women status in predominantly Muslim majority countries. Therefore, this paper will make a theoretical link between oil and gender inequality throughout Islamist perspective to draw a correlation between these variables to find out how oil can negatively influence women's status in the society, allowing us to examine the different counter variables, mitigating negative consequences of oil revenues in Malaysia, keeping society relatively gender equal.

To provide a solid ground for a research, the aim of theoretical part is to uncover the connections between oil, Islam, and other variables influencing gender inequality in Muslim majority Petro states also, explaining how and to what extent oil revenues and Islam are causing greater gender inequality to happen. In order to discover the connection between oil and the greater gender gap in relatively Muslim majority countries, thus economic model, Dutch Disease Theory, will explain the phenomenon of the negative correlation between oil dependency and gender inequality. On the other hand, explaining the way of how religion affects the society in the Muslim majority Petro states, thesis is going to use a theory of religious impact on the society in order to uncover the effects of religion. The purpose is to describe the way of how oil revenues and Islamist religiosity can negatively shape gender inequality in Muslim majority petro-states.

This thesis seeks to provide a brief analytical account of the correlation between oil, Islam and gender inequality in MENA to measure the scale of significance of both

⁸ U.S. Energy Information Administration, "International Energy Statistics," (accessed: October, 2017), Available at: <http://www.eia.gov/cfapps/ipdbproject/iedindex3.cfm?tid=5&pid=57&aid=6&cid=regions&syid=2010&eyid=2014&unit=BB>.

independent variables to validate their impact, causing gender inequality in the region and to measure the significance of oil towards other variables, providing comparison scale. This thesis also argue that oil is not only one and the most powerful variable explaining gender gap in Muslim majority countries as Michael Ross is claiming, but on the other hand there is Islamic religion, traditions, role of governments and other variables which might potentially negatively shape gender equality in the Muslim majority petro states as we are going to observe in the case of Malaysia.

The author believes that forces of religiosity are more powerful than the countries' dependency on oil exports causing gender gaps in the societies, especially in MENA countries. However, by the examination of Malaysian case, we might find other potential variables, which might be more significant rather than oil and Islam combined together. By addressing basic hypotheses, this work aims to verify these assumptions quantitatively and qualitatively by choosing the case study of Malaysia to compare and address the issue of gender gap caused by oil and religious beliefs. In the case of Malaysia, as Petro state with majority Muslim population with higher geographical proximity from the MENA region makes a good example to observe variables influencing gender inequality in Muslim majority Petro states.

In order to more effectively assess and describe the complexity of the effects of oil and religion on women's subordination in Muslim majority countries to understand the link between oil, Islam and gender gap, it is important to put it into theoretical perspective, explaining the role of oil and its negative economic consequences in Muslim majority countries, and how it directly affects women's status in society. It is essential to choose the theoretical approach which will offer us an explanation of how oil can be correlated with gender inequality index and what are the negative consequences of countries' dependence on

oil. The Dutch Disease theory would be the most suitable theory in order to observe the process of negative consequences of oil revenues on women's employment, causing the gender inequality index to rise; as low participation of women in labour, education, and politics is decreasing their status as whole in the society, subsequently deepening gap between genders.

1.3 Methodology

This thesis is divided into two main sections. The first section is providing a theoretical framework of consequences of oil revenues and Islamist religion on the status of women in MENA. The second provides a qualitative platform of the case study of Malaysia, trying to provide validity of previous research results drew from a literature review. Essential will be to find to what extent oil revenues and Islamist religiosity are responsible for causing gender inequalities in Muslim majority countries. On the other hand to overview why MENA countries suffer from the lowest levels of gender equality and why some oil abundant countries are doing relatively better than the others.

Objectively point out the strengths and weaknesses of the previous researches, if the oil revenues and Islamist religion are powerful independent variables to sweep the gender equality away. The author is going to examine literature review of previous quantitative and qualitative studies in order to provide a correlation between oil revenues, Islamist religiosity, and gender inequality index, applied inside of the MENA region. The following chapters will provide an overview, where the case of Malaysia will be examined, if the results of previous literature can be applied in MENA countries, furthermore if the findings can be implemented in the case study of Malaysia. This study is going to provide a good base for examination of why Malaysian women can enjoy higher gender equality ranking, than women living in

MENA region. The second section of the case of Malaysia will provide further analyses of counter variables mitigating negative consequences of the oil revenues and Islam.

Dutch Disease or Resource curse theory—is used in order to explain how the possession of oil resources can often have negative consequences on the economic and political development of oil-producing states, affecting women's status to a high extent, applied in MENA. Therefore, knowing the way of how oil revenues are causing gender inequality could lead to further examination of other variables closely associated with negative workings of oil. It will help to find mitigating variables in the case study of Malaysia, which are lessening negative effects of oil, allowing Malaysian women to enjoy higher women's status.

Chapter II will provide empirical case studies in order to support the theory and hypothesis of negative correlation of oil, Islam on gender inequality in MENA region. This chapter will characterize MENA countries in order to support the credibility of Dutch disease and negative workings of Islam on gender inequality inside of countries of MENA. The second part of the chapter will also provide a visual representation of various levels of variables impacting gender inequality, allowing us to find potential mitigating variables, which their credibility can be tested in the case of Malaysia.

To compare the different levels of significance of oil, Islam and other variables, which are theoretically affecting gender inequality index. The previous results can be drawn out of literature review. Oil revenues and the percentage of Muslim population are theoretically causing gender inequality to happen, as literature review suggests; therefore, the second chapter will examine the variables and compare their significance of correlation with the gender inequality index, in order to provide the most objective answer to what extent are oil exports and Islam responsible for the low gender status in Muslim majority countries.

This thesis also focuses on economic growth and development, since literature review suggests the negative correlation of oil revenues and economic development in majority Muslim petro states; suggesting that oil revenues cannot bring economic development, creating more opportunities for women to seek employment, but on the other side, economic growth caused by oil booms are unstable, therefore reviewing literature review and building up connections side by side with theoretical framework can uncover the effects of oil revenues, impacting economic development, furthermore influencing women's opportunity to work, causing gender inequality to happen.

The second part of the thesis is consisted out of two chapters. It provides support through a qualitative platform for conclusions drawn out of literature review, by the examination of the variables affecting gender inequality in Malaysia, uncovering the potential variables, which differ from MENA variables, mitigating negative consequences of independent variables of oil and Islamist religion in Muslim majority countries. The First chapter provides a comparison of similarities and differences between MENA countries and Malaysia serving as a valuable tool for explaining the difference in women's status in two different regions. It identifies the mitigating variables of the negative consequences of oil and Islam not causing such a deep gender gap in Malaysia in comparison to MENA region. The first chapter is going to help us to explain, why Malaysia is a relatively gender equal country, even due to the fact of being Muslim majority country, possessing significant reserves of oil.

Before turning to the examination of the case of Malaysia, it is important to analyze the effect of oil revenues and Islamist religion on the gender inequality by looking at the historical development of the position of women in Muslim majority countries and to analyse effects of Islamist beliefs on traditions and everyday life of women in Muslim countries. The oil in relation to gender inequality can be examined by Dutch disease theory to find

applicability within Muslim majority countries. This part of work will closely explain the role of both, oil and religion impacting gender inequality in Muslim majority Petro countries, providing us a base for further comparison of the case of Malaysia and other majority Muslim countries in MENA. The comparison above explains why Malaysian women can enjoy higher gender equality privileges towards males compared their Islamist sisters located in MENA region.

Chapter III will measure the effect of oil revenues on gender inequality in Malaysia, as the country possesses the significant oil resources, but enjoying considerably better values of women's status. This chapter will evaluate, if oil revenues can have a negative effect on gender inequality, proving the validity of Dutch disease in Malaysia. As chapter II provides the differences between MENA and Malaysia, this chapter is going to evaluate the variables, which significantly differ, potentially having a counter mitigating effect on Malaysia women, causing lower gender inequality.

The brief historical review of the political and economic situation of Malaysia will be a valuable asset to find variables which are mitigating negative consequences of oil. The author will compare and examine different levels of economic complexity index which might have a positive effect by lessening negative causes of Dutch disease. The author's assumption is that more diverse economy of Muslim majority country is causing an overall percentage of female labour force growing, making Malaysian women more empowered. In order to prove this assumption, an author is going to examine if rising economic complexity index improved women's status in Malaysia in comparison with MENA countries.

Chapter IV will measure the impact of different level of Islamicity on local women in individual parts of Malaysia, explaining why these independent variables are not having such an impact on dependent variable as gender inequality index in MENA countries is pointing

out. Therefore, the author will examine the mitigating variables, which are reducing the impact of religion on the Malaysian society. As the second chapter pointed out different levels of religiosity in various Muslim majority petrostates, therefore this chapter will observe if religious pluralism in the sense of Muslims and non-Muslim's population living together can have an impact on gender inequality.

The analysis of variables affecting gender inequality in Malaysian society can be done through direct observations, or field work to test the assumptions of variables which might be theoretically responsible for affecting women's status as literature review is suggesting. Therefore chapter III and IV will examine variables which might be responsible for counterbalancing and mediating the negative effects of oil and Islam on gender inequality index. The analysis of the effects of the mitigating variables can provide the solution for the main puzzle of why Malaysian women can enjoy higher levels of gender inequality than women in MENA.

The author will measure the Islamist religiosity in individual states inside of Malaysia, directly comparing it, to each other and also make a comparison with countries located in MENA. In the case of oil revenues, the difference comes with the different amount of drilled oil and overall economic and political situation of different entities, having various impacts on Malaysian and MENA societies. Further on, the author will review the existing literature in order to build up causality, between oil revenues, Islamist religiosity and gender inequality in majority Muslim petro states. The review is going to help to find the significance of other variables causing mitigation of negative causes of oil and Islam in Malaysia.

Malaysia, by its diverse multicultural society, provides a good case study for observation of various levels of religious pluralism by measuring the percentage of non-Muslim population living together with Muslims, since 61.7% of Malaysians are Muslims and

rest of population are non-Muslims. Therefore, Malaysia is most suitable case study compared to other Muslim majority Petro states, located outside of MENA region. (Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Brunei)

Malaysia has different states possessing with various levels of a religious plurality (% of non-Muslims living in particular state in Malaysia) therefore it is possible to observe how different level of religious pluralism is affecting the level of Islamicity. Since there are no existing data of Islamicity measured across various states of Malaysia, the author constructed questionnaire in order to capture different levels of Islamicity based on the different location of respondents.

Judging from the hypothesis of an author, linear regression should point to the negative correlation of % of a non-Muslim and Islamicity level, meaning that religious pluralism is indirectly affecting gender inequality index. As a higher level of Islamicity is leading towards a more conservative perception of women in the society; therefore, Malaysia as a country with the highest index of liberal Islamicity should enjoy higher gender equality. Before this thesis will move to the literature review, it is important for whole research to review components of gender inequality index and explain why women's employment is a key dimension of this index to take into consideration for this thesis.

1.3.1 Gender Inequality Index

Gender inequality index is consisted of many variables in order to result in as most objective way as possible to identify equal opportunities within society between men and women. This index has been selected because it is one of the most commonly-used indicators of the status of women and addresses gender inequality in the economic, the political, and also

the social sphere.⁹ The value ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 represents the ideal type of gender equality, whereas on the other side close proximity to 1 indicates severe inequality. The index represents the extent to which a state's progress, in terms of human development, is disrupted by gender inequality.¹⁰

In United States, Europe or East Asia, not long time ago, these countries were facing strong patriarchal cultures; globalization of the markets and economic revolutions caused rapid economic rise and access to job opportunities lifted women's status above severe gender inequality that is the reason why this thesis take analyzes of female labour participation into consideration towards men employment as one of its variables.

Access to employment improves women's lives and is listed among the top five priorities for promoting gender equality in the 2012 World Development Report.¹¹ The higher the percentage of women in the adult labour force, the more independence women have to conduct their economic affairs and to contribute to the development of their countries, that is why this variable is vital part of dependent variable as well as gender inequality index.¹²

1.4 Literature Review

Literature review is an essential part of this research in order to understand and identify all the variables, potentially having influence on the status of women. Reviewing existing literature provides a good base for further research of what extent the mixture of oil

⁹ Sarbajit Chaudhuri, "Foreign capital, non-traded goods and welfare in a developing economy in the presence of externalities," *International Review of Economics & Finance, Elsevier*, (published: 2014)

Kamila Klingorova and Tomáš Havlicek, "Religion and gender inequality: The status of women in the societies of world religions."

¹⁰ United Nations, "The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World," *Human Development Report 2013*, (New York, 2013)

¹¹ The World Bank, "Gender Equality and Development," *World Development Report 2012*, (Washington DC, 2012)

¹² Kamila Klingorova and Tomáš Havlicek, "Religion and gender inequality: The status of women in the societies of world religions."

revenues and religion causing gender inequality in Muslim majority Petro states. The literature review provides a theoretical platform supported by quantitative and qualitative researches of how particular variables affecting gender inequality index.

1.4.1 Oil and Gender Inequality

The discovery of precious mineral resources across the underdeveloped regions brought hopes for many people living under the line of poverty; but there are long-standing fears that resources will be a curse rather than a blessing.¹³ The sceptics predict that discovery of natural resources; especially oil will affect negatively gender equality across the region. As oil's dependency will cause local economy to fluctuate according to global oil prices; therefore, the lack of economic diversification will have a negative impact on the whole society and economy of the country, indirectly influencing women's position in the society.¹⁴

On the other hand, empirical case studies in oil booming countries suggest that oil revenues are mostly followed by rapid investments into economy having positive effect on socio-economy, indirectly influencing status of women as well.¹⁵ Sachs and Warner are claiming that some oil abundant petro-state countries can have high or low economic growth rates and low level investments based on fact of management of resources.¹⁶ The cases of many corrupted countries with low rule of law enforcement are still suffering even after oil boom. Moreover, the oil revenues are not the only one variable which has to be taken into

¹³ Andreas Kotsadam and Anja Tolonen, "African Mining, Gender, and local employment," *World Development* Vol. 83, (New York – 2016) p. 325–339

¹⁴ Andreas Kotsadam and Anja Tolonen, "African Mining, Gender, and local employment"

¹⁵ Hassana Khalid and Azrai Abdullah, "Effect of Oil Revenue and the Sudan Economy: Econometric Model for Services Sector GDP," *Global Conference on Business & Social Science*, (published: Elsevier, 2015), p.15-16
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S187704281500395X>

¹⁶ Jeffrey Sachs and Andrew Warner, "Fundamental Sources of Long-run Growth," *Amer. Econ. Rev.*, (1997), p. 184–188.

consideration. Recent economic growth points on the fact that half of the world's population nearly every decade has doubled its income.

Observations of empirical cases indicate that countries with the highest economic growth have relatively few natural resources, but on the other hand, they possess with relatively a lot of people feeding the economic booms.¹⁷ In recent decades, countries richly endowed with valuable resources have had a worsen their economic development than countries lacking valuable resources; indirectly impacting women's status in the society as Dutch disease is moving job opportunities away from women in countries rich on resources.¹⁸ There are also couple of successful examples in which resource curse was overcome, as for instance in case of Norway, where oil revenues brought expected socio-economic improvements together with lowering gender gaps.

The existence of vast majority of literature reveals the findings, why Norway does not suffer from Dutch disease. Since exploitation of Norway's oil reserves is going side by side connected with overall economic growth rate. This case points out that there are winners and losers within natural resource abundant countries, because of the different dimensions between them. It is vital for this thesis to have a discussion why different oil abundant countries and their different dimensions can lead to positive or negative socioeconomics developments. However, Norway, Botswana, Malaysia and countries of MENA are diametrically different; therefore it is difficult to measure significance of every variable mitigating negative consequences of oil income, impacting women's status.

We are still lacking sufficient knowledge along which dimensions the resource-abundant countries differ from each other, having different effect on the economy and indirectly influencing status of women inside of petro states. However, Muslim majority petro

¹⁷ Ragnar Torvik, "Why do some resource-abundant countries succeed while others do not?" (Oxford University Press, 2009), Available at: <http://www.svt.ntnu.no/iso/Ragnar.Torvik/OXREP.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid.

states is very specific group of countries providing great example where we can control religion, giving us group of countries which are culturally and traditionally influenced by Islamic religion. In that case, this thesis can focus on other variables which are mitigating negative consequences of oil and Islam on women's status to unveil differences within majority Muslim petro states, respectively between MENA and countries outside of this region.

Labour as a vital variable for economic growth of every country might be extended by giving women opportunity to work, and to join socio-economic life outside of the household. As the academics of development studies point on the importance of women to join workfare, because *“the failure of women to join the non-agricultural labor force has profound social consequences: it leads to higher fertility rates, less education for girls, and less female influence within the family. It also has far-reaching political consequences: when fewer women work outside the home, they are less likely to exchange information and overcome collective action problems; less likely to mobilize politically, and to lobby for expanded rights; and less likely to gain representation in government.”*¹⁹

This vicious cycle is keeping the status of women low with strong patriarchal supremacy. One of the leading researchers and academics in the field of oil curse in the Middle East – Michael L. Ross claims that the extraordinary export of the crude oil is overvaluing domestic currencies in the MENA region, driving massive imports, and killing local exporting manufacturers, consequently leaving women subordinate in the society.²⁰

Ross argues that oil is keeping women stuck inside a vicious cycle of poverty and under educated, impacting their position in the household and society. “According Gary

¹⁹ Thomas L. Friedman, *“Hot, Flat, and Crowded 2.0: Why We Need a Green Revolution--and How It Can Renew America,”* (New York: Picador, 2009), p.136

²⁰ Micheal L. Ross, “Oil, Islam, and Women,” *American Political Science Review* 102, (New York: February 2, 2008)

Barker based on his survey; the most significant factor of how people viewed equality was their wealth, level of education, and the example set by their parents. Both men and women were more likely to hold equitable views on gender if their mothers had more education and fathers were more involved in domestic tasks.”²¹ The variables as education level and wealth of particular household also vary on countries political and economic development level. Therefore, the quantitative research will deal with various variables in order to analyze their impact on status of women in Muslim majority petro countries.

Academics realize that gender equality and the emancipation of women as important factors for the economic, social, and democratic progress of the world’s regions and for the development of human society, adding on to the importance to this research. Ross believes that oil industries are undermining traditional manufacturing sectors, which served as a hopeful place for less educated women to seek employment in order to escape vicious cycle of under education and poverty. This process would accordingly increase the position of women through participation in workfare in sectors other than agricultural, leading more women to seek higher education and serve not only for the emancipation of women, but also for a countries’ better aggregate economic performance.²²

The question of whether the discovery of natural resources is a blessing or a curse for the economy and for a country’s citizens is a contentious issue, and natural resources dependence is linked to various outcomes at national level as other researchers have been already done at: institutions, corruption, civil war and conflict, rent appropriation by an elite, democracy, and for our research most important female labor force participation.²³ Ross

²¹ Thomas L. Friedman, “*Hot, Flat, and Crowded 2.0: Why We Need a Green Revolution--and How It Can Renew America.*”

²² Micheal L. Ross, “Oil, Islam, and Women,” *American Political Science Review* 102, (New York: February 2, 2008)

²³ Halvor Mehlum, Karl Moene, Ragnar Torvik, “Institutions and the Resource Curse,” *The economic Journal* – 2006
Micheal L. Ross, “Oil, Islam, and Women,”

claims that women have made less progress toward gender equality in the Middle East than in any other region, and he suggests that it is not caused due to Islamic religion as many observers would claim.²⁴ Ross suggests, that “women in the Middle East are underrepresented in the workforce and in government because of oil—not Islam,”²⁵ judging from the empirical case studies of other societies, where patriarchal traditions in recent times were as strong as in Middle East, but due to diversification and openness of economy they had a chance to experience an economic boost, bringing more democratic regimes, and giving women opportunity to seek employment due to grow of employment market supply as in case of America and Europe mainly in 20th Century, where economic demand brought women into work force, subsequently lowering gender gaps by making women more independent out of their husbands.

Similarly, Ross claims that exploitation of natural resources hurts women’s employment via both demand and supply channels.²⁶ In his model, female labour supply is reduced via household income effects, spurred by higher male incomes and/or government transfers, keeping women out of the workfare and inside of their homes, especially pointing on the case of MENA region. The demand for female labour decreases as oil export-oriented, mainly at countries with high dependence on oil export, causing female dominated manufacturing crowded out by Dutch disease effects – making them less competitive at international markets.²⁷ This massive industrialization resulted in the fact that the economic growth performance of the Middle East in the 1960s reached one of the highest labor force

Tolonen Kotsadam, “African Mining, Gender, and local employment,” *World Development*

²⁴ Micheal L. Ross, “Oil, Islam, and Women,” *American Political Science Review* 102, (New York: February 2, 2008)

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 109-110

²⁷ Michael L. Ross, “*The Oil Curse: How the Petroleum Wealth Shapes Development of the Nations.*” (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012) p.124

growth rates in the developing world.²⁸ “And the economic growth performance of the Middle East in the 1960s was the highest in the world at 6.0 percent per worker per year.”²⁹ The rational logic would predict that the higher prices of oil would bring economic growth to the region at that time, but in the next decade in early 1970s productivity growth actually turned negative as is the example of Dutch disease observed before in Netherlands would suggest.³⁰

Existing literature revealed many limitations of missing work providing direct linkage of oil revenues and gender status. There is only couple of existing scholars who are dealing with issues of oil and gender inequality; and all of them are claiming that oil has a negative impact on gender equality. However, indirectly we can examine some of the positive cases, where countries managed to escape resource curse phenomenon and managed to score positive economic growth side by side with growing revenues from oil incomes managed to fulfil the gender gap as we can observe in cases of Norway and Botswana. Thus, it would be incorrect to claim that the women’s statuses in all petro-states are negatively affected by oil exploitation. However, on the other hand empirical cases studies indicate that countries possessing with more oil income flowing into aggregate GDP have tendency to have the highest gender inequality indexes.

In order to interconnect oil revenues and gender inequality, it is important to understand how economic development can affect status of women in the society. The causality of oil revenues would predict that oil revenues will raise economic development followed by improvement of gender gap. However, the previous section of literature review suggests negative correlation between oil revenues and economic development is negative, causing Dutch disease happens. “The relative status of women is poor in the developing

²⁸ The World Bank, “Economic Growth in 1990s: Learning from Decade of Reform,” (Washington D.C: The World Bank, 2003) pp.156

²⁹ Thomas Yousef, “Development, Growth and Policy Reform in the Middle East and North Africa since 1950,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 18, No 3 (Summer, 2004), p. 91

³⁰ Thomas Yousef, “Development, Growth and Policy Reform in the Middle East and North Africa since 1950”

world, compared to developed countries.”³¹ Most of the studies suggest that countries could raise their respective GDP levels by giving a chance for women to enter the labour market or vice versa, because both variables have mutual impact on each other.³² They found out significant impact of gender inequality on economic growth.³³ On the other hands our graph suggest that many MENA countries already reached high levels of economic development as GDP and GDP per capita are indicating, but they struggle with social development, therefore it is important for this thesis to explain why oil revenues are not capable of meditating gender inequality through economic development.

Furthermore, economic development is promoting the openness of domestic markets in order to expose themselves to international markets, pushing forces of democracy to penetrate with trading of foreign goods at international markets.³⁴ Strong evidence suggests that economic development and democracy are to a high extent correlated, as democracy is seen as important tool to push women emancipation to close the gender gaps.³⁵ However, it seems that even economic development is not capable to push democracy forward to penetrate into MENA countries nor can it directly promote higher levels of gender equality in the region.

On the other hand other group of academics, including Michael Ross argue that oil revenues and high prices of oil can stabilize authoritarianism and authoritarian regimes, which are dominating in the most of the MENA countries' politics.³⁶ This complex network of

³¹ David Dollar and Roberta Gatti, “Gender Inequality, Income, and Growth: Are Good Times Good for Women?,” *World Bank*, (May 1999), Available at: <http://darp.lse.ac.uk/frankweb/courses/EC501/DG.pdf>

³² Meera Kaul, “The Role Of Gender Equality In Ensuring Economic Growth,” *Entrepreneur*, (April 11, 2016), Available at: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/273825>

³³ Stephan Klasen, “Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development? Evidence from Cross-Country Regressions” *Collaborative Research Center*, (April 5, 2007), Available at: <https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/1602/>

³⁴ Esther Duflo, “Gender Equality and Economic Development,” (Bocconi Lecture: 2010), Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIB8DlmaKh8>

³⁵ Barbara Geddes, “What Do We Know about Democratization After Twenty Years?,” *Annual Reviews*, (June 1999), Available at: <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.115>

³⁶ Micheal L. Ross, “Oil, Islam, and Women”

aspects are putting many Muslim majority countries as extraordinary example where wealth is flowing from natural resources and bringing very limited economic development, which cannot have a positive effect on gender equality due to persistence of authoritarian politics in the region, which is not relocating resources to counter attack gender gap in their societies. Therefore, the examination of gender budgeting would be needed to distinguish the different efforts of governments of particular Muslim majority countries.

The figure above visually points out that developed countries with higher gross domestic product per capita are doing better in terms of gender equality. As economic productivity of a particular country rises, the gender gap is becoming less and less visible and these gaps are particularly dramatic in developing countries.³⁷ However, some countries mostly consisted out of MENA states are indicating that high GDP growth will not always bring positive socio-economic consequences for a country.³⁸ Even due to the fact that employment gaps are closing much faster in developing countries rather than developed, but the gender inequality is still visible to high extent, especially in South East Asia and the MENA.³⁹ Moreover, women are mostly considered as family workers and often not paid, which does not significantly support women's position in the region's societies.⁴⁰ This might be also reason why some academics claim negative correlation between economic development and gender inequality.

Khayria Karoui and Rochdi Feki were debating the impact of these two variables in African countries; they found out that results can be biased by multiple factors, what we can

³⁷ David Dollar and Roberta Gatti, "Gender Inequality, Income, and Growth: Are Good Times Good for Women?," *World Bank*, (May 1999), Available at: <http://darplse.ac.uk/frankweb/courses/EC501/DG.pdf>

³⁸ Stephanie Seguino, "Gender Inequality and Economic Growth: A Cross-Country Analysis," *Science Direct*, (July 2000), Available at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X00000188>

³⁹ David Cuberes and Marc Teignier-Baque, "Gender Inequality and Economic Growth," *World Bank* (Washington, DC: 2012), Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/9117>

Stephan Klasen, "Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development? Evidence from Cross-Country Regressions" *Collaborative Research Center*, (April 5, 2007), Available at: <https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/1602/>

⁴⁰ David Cuberes and Marc Teignier-Baque, "Gender Inequality and Economic Growth," *World Bank*

also apply into the MENA region.⁴¹ “In addition, economic growth is indirectly affected through the impact of gender inequality on investment and population growth,”⁴² causing variance of variables, possibly explaining the MENA region as outlier in our graph. Therefore, the importance lies on explaining causality of variables (gender inequality, economic growth, level of democracy and oil revenues) affecting each other to find out why MENA countries are not fitting into the hypothesis of many scholars which try to explain the correlation between gender inequality and economic development through quantitative studies methods.

Economic development and diversification of the economy increases the set of available opportunities for women, which increases returns to education.⁴³ On the other hand, following the logic in previous section, the Dutch disease of oil producing countries is making it impossible to diversify the economy and subsequently hindering the opportunity for women to seek employment.

Moreover, the oil revenues serve as blocking point for democracy to penetrate into political systems of the most of the countries in the region, strengthening autocratic regimes. As the prices of oil are set up high, autocratic regimes in the region are providing relocation of oil revenues to keep themselves empowered, reducing chances for women to exit household since it is not needed. Oil revenues allowing governments to conduct direct transfers are hurting women chances to seek opportunity outside of their households. The money are not spent into the diversification of economy, but rather for the strengthening of the ruling regimes, in what could otherwise provide chances for women to seek employment.

⁴¹ Khayria Karoui and Rochdi Feki, “The Effect of Gender Inequality on Economic Development: Case of African Countries,” (Springer: December 23, 2015)

⁴² Stephan Klasen, “Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development? Evidence from Cross-Country Regressions” *Collaborative Research Center*

⁴³ The Republic of Rwanda, “Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy II 2013-2018,” (May, 2013), Available at: http://www.rdb.rw/uploads/tx_sbdownloader/EDPRS_2_Main_Document.pdf

In addition, gender inequality in education and health can also be explained to a considerable extent by religious preference, regional factors, and civil freedom. These systematic patterns in gender differentials suggest that low investment in women is not an efficient economic choice, and we can show that gender inequality in education is bad for economic growth.⁴⁴ Thus, societies that have a preference for not investing in girls, they pay a price for it in terms of slower growth and reduced income, but MENA countries pay a price in order to keep power within the elites rather than transferring oil money into households.⁴⁵ Therefore, Dollar and Gatti suggest that economic development is highly correlated with gender equality; however, stereotypes are a threat in terms that parents are expecting direct benefits in investing into boys' education rather than girls.⁴⁶ On the same note, economic development (capita income), there are other functions affecting gender equality such a civil liberties, religious preferences, and economic policies implemented by governments.⁴⁷

1.4.2 Religion and Gender Inequality

On the other hand as our study focus on the majority Muslim countries, the objectivity lies on the necessity of the evaluation and identification of how significant is the influence of world religions on gender inequality, and the social status of women come as the vital part of this thesis. Many scholars argue that status of women in society is an outcome of the

⁴⁴ David Dollar and Roberta Gatti, "Gender Inequality, Income, and Growth: Are Good Times Good for Women?," *World Bank*, (May 1999), Available at: <http://darp.lse.ac.uk/frankweb/courses/EC501/DG.pdf>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Esther Duflo, "Gender Equality and Economic Development," (Bocconi Lecture: 2010), Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIB8DlmaKh8>

interpretation of religious texts penetrating deeply into society even nowadays, and of the cultural and institutional settings of religious communities.⁴⁸

Gender inequality as the form of social inequality between genders is visible not only in Muslim majority countries, but no different extent in whole world. According to Inglehart and Norris, these differences are primarily due to cultural legacies, historical development, geographic location, and, last but not least, the religious norms which are predominate in the society.⁴⁹ Therefore, in the second part of this thesis, it will be important to keep in mind that these forces influencing women's status in order to choose two Muslim majority countries with respect of the different cultures, historical development, and geographical location. However, both disposing with significant amount of oil for observation of different effects on gender inequality indexes will be important to preserve.

Religious beliefs are deeply rooted in peoples' experiences, directly influencing the socio-economic and political direction of societies.⁵⁰ In this sense, the importance also lies on the distinguishing of different political system, which might potentially lead to greater gender inequality or equality. All world religions today maintain male social dominance within societal structures, but empirical research on developments in the individual religions, especially in the case of Islam; indicate a negative shift in society towards a decreased status of women.⁵¹

In most of the cultures and religions, conservative traditions prevailing regarding faith, prevailing multiple centuries are applied more strictly to women rather than men, especially

⁴⁸ Kamila Klingorova and Tomáš Havlíček, "Religion and gender inequality: The status of women in the societies of world religions," *Moravian Geographical Reports* 2/2015, Vol. 23 (Prague: February, 2015), p.3-5

⁴⁹ Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, "Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World," (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

⁵⁰ David P. Stump, "Book Review: Evolution and Religious Creation Myths: How Scientists Respond," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, (December 29, 2009)

Kamila Klingorova, Tomáš Havlíček, "Religion and gender inequality: The status of women in the societies of world religions"

⁵¹ Jean Holm, "Women in Religion," (Bloomsbury Academic – 1994)

coming to places of worship or other places of religious importance, allowing and supporting women segregation in mosques, or even some temples and places of worship are restricting women to enter holy places.⁵² These facts possibly having negative consequences even outside of places with religious importance, spreading religious beliefs into everyday interactions, impacting women's status in the society. "Religious people are more intolerant and have more conservative views of the role of women in society."⁵³ Therefore, according to conservative traditions based on religiosity, religion is the tallest barrier for women to climb over in order to achieve equal opportunities and reduce current gender gap, as some components of Islam being gender discriminatory.⁵⁴

Speaking about status of women in Muslim countries, "Majority of men in Middle East believe a woman's place is in the home."⁵⁵ This old conservative views in the MENA countries, according co-author of the study and president of equality campaign Promundo, Gary Barker, "There is a long way to go for men to fully accept and support equality for women in the Arab region, as in many parts of the world," viewing gender inequality in the region of Middle East and North Africa as a mixture of long traditions and possible fault of undermining women opportunities.⁵⁶

"Across all four countries used in Promundo's sample (Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine), it is observable that one of the best way to reduce gender inequality is when men involve themselves into more of the activities in the home previously perceive as women's

⁵² Ankita Singh, "Why Religion Is The Hardest Barrier Women Must Overcome For Gender Equality," *Elite Daily*, (March 9, 2016), Available at: <http://elitedaily.com/women/religion-women-barrier-equality/1412604/>

⁵³ Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza, Luigi Zingales, "People's opium? Religion and economic attitudes," *Journal of Monetary Economics* 50, (September 6th, 2002)

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Kate Lyons, "Majority of men in Middle East survey believe a woman's place is in the home," *The Guardian* (May 2, 2017), Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/may/02/majority-of-men-in-middle-east-north-africa-survey-believe-a-womans-place-is-in-the-home>

⁵⁶ Ibid.

roles.”⁵⁷ Disrupting this old conservative tradition or religious beliefs, nowadays can equalize gender gap. In the most of Middle Eastern and North African families, men are the one who are bringing financial resources into household, paralyzing participation of the women in social and public life outside of household.⁵⁸ Therefore author beliefs that increasing women’s labor participation can also increase gender equality across the whole MENA region and other Muslim majority countries.

Based on the quantitative research of doctors Hlavicek and Klingorova, by comparison of status of the women in the societies of world religions, they asserted that there is the highest level of gender equality in states without a dominant religious affiliation and highest gender inequality in countries affiliated to Islam.⁵⁹ As Khaled Hroub disagreeing with statement that adherence to faith as general, providing the base for superior moral standards; as his research found out that in Muslim countries located in MENA, considering to be some of the most religious societies in the world having highest rates of bad practice as a sexual harassment of women and lack of respect for public order, deepening gender inequality.⁶⁰

On the other hand, Michael Ross is arguing in his book, *The Oil Curse*, that the countries in the region have a common religion, and broadly speaking common culture, so according him if these variables would be source of the problem, then women in the MENA countries should have about the same low economic and political status.⁶¹ He is adding that states with higher revenues flowing from oil drilling have the fewest women employed in non-agricultural workforce and therefore are less likely to grant female suffrage; on the other

⁵⁷ Kate Lyons, “Majority of men in Middle East survey believe a woman's place is in the home,” *The Guardian*

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Kamila Klingorova and Tomáš Havlicek, “Religion and gender inequality: The status of women in the societies of world religions,” p.3-5

⁶⁰ Khaled Hroub, “The Curse of Religiosity,” *Islam in the Middle East*, (June 30, 2017), Available at: <https://en.qantara.de/content/islam-in-the-middle-east-the-curse-of-religiosity>

⁶¹ Michael L. Ross, “*The Oil Curse: How the Petroleum Wealth Shapes Development of the Nations*,” (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012) p.124

hand states possessing with non significant amounts of oil were among the first countries in the region to grant female suffrage and tend to have more female in the workplace.⁶²

The impact of religiosity on gender attitudes and gender inequality poses with a vast of existing literature, indicating the strong correlation between Islamic religiosity and gender inequality. There is missing part of literature supporting religiosity as a positive variable for women's status improvement; however, on the other hand all the reviewed literature is suggesting that religion has negative impact on women's status.

According to literature review and empirical observations, it is assumable that in all the Muslim majority petro states, Islamist religiosity and oil dependency are dragging down gender equality as observable in the case of MENA. However, there are four other Muslim majority petro states outside of this region, which are possessing with vast oil reserves having majority Muslim population and their women can enjoy relatively higher women's status. Therefore, the main purpose of this thesis is to solve this puzzle why women in some of the oil abundant majority Muslim countries can enjoy higher gender equality and in some Muslim majority petro countries cannot.

Education and Religion are two very important variables affecting and changing behaviour of societies for hundreds years, therefore the relationship between them, more preciously correlation between the level of religiosity and the level of education has been studied long time ago. These studies provide valuable sources of literature building causality between these two variables.

However, different studies show contrasted conclusions. Western countries indicate that the intensity of beliefs decreases with education, surprisingly attendance and religious practice increases. Moreover, it is important to add that research of Sacerdote and Glaeser was

⁶² Michael L. Ross, *"The Oil Curse: How the Petroleum Wealth Shapes Development of the Nations,"* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012) p.124

conducted before new millennium.⁶³ Smith is claimed before Sacerdote and Glaeser that religious people are having higher education than non-religious, which is not fitting into concept of countries located inside of MENA region.⁶⁴

Recent scholarly works are pointing on the positive correlation with low religiosity and education has been changing in the past few decades.⁶⁵ Recently, many countries, including MENA states are doing good job in closing gender educational gaps, logically from Western perspective leading into lowering levels of Islamist religiosity, consequently improving women's status in MENA. Voas and McAndrew in recent years regressing a measure of religiosity on a set of individual controls have found a surprisingly positive relationship between education and religion. A vast majority of studies in recent years are suggesting a positive relationship between religion and education.⁶⁶ Therefore, closing gender educational gaps in countries of MENA are most likely will not improve women's status in the region by educating women to higher extent. However, the equal chance for education can increase the chances of women, seeking chance at labour market, what at certain scenarios might have a positive effect on emancipation of females in MENA region.

1.4.3 Gender Inequality in Malaysia

Table 1.1 pointed out that Malaysia is considerably behind leading countries in terms of gender inequality ranked 104 out of 144 countries. However, it is relatively better ranked

⁶³ Bruce Sacerdote and Edward Glaeser, "Education and Religion," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, (January, 2001), p.29

⁶⁴ Christian Smith, "American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving," (University of Chicago Press: 1998), p. 76–77

⁶⁵ David Voas and Siobhan McAndrew, "Three Puzzles of Non-religion in Britain," *In Arweck, Elisabeth; Bullivant, Stephen; Lee, Lois. Secularity and Non-religion*, (Routledge Press, London: 2014), p.28-30

⁶⁶ J. Gruber, "Religious market structure, religious participation, and outcomes: is religion good for you?," *Advances in Economic Analysis & Policy*, 5 (2005)

compared other Muslim majority Petro states. Why are Malaysian women relatively doing better than women in MENA region? There is missing existing literature to answer this question, therefore further analysis is needed. However, there are many indicators that Malaysian Muslim's women are starting to play key roles outside out their households.

Introductory part already unveiled facts that Malaysia is slowly progressing in terms of gender inequality. In 1982, Malaysia was still heavily depended on oil reserves and only 1.8 million women were employed. However, a couple of decades later when Malaysia's government implemented policies to boost the economy by diversification of various sectors, in statistics of 2013, the number of women employed tripled.⁶⁷

However, gender pay gap in terms of employment of both genders is still unequal. Recent studies pointed out that unmarried woman without ambition of having kids continues to earn a similar amount of money as a man.⁶⁸ On the other side, Malaysian Muslim's women are socially pressured by religious beliefs to marry early and have kids. Therefore, it is much more difficult to keep income equality within both genders.

In terms of political empowerment, Malaysia still suffers; the patriarchal composition of parliament is pulling down the gender inequality index as Malaysia is missing women in politics. National parliament is composed out of only 11% of women.⁶⁹ This fact might be caused by religious beliefs, as Islam is putting women into the heart of household, taking care of a house and its family.

⁶⁷ Aminah Ahmad, "Women in Malaysia," *Asian Development Bank*, (December 1998), Available at: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32552/women-malaysia.pdf>

⁶⁸ Goh Wei Liang, "Gender inequality and women in Malaysia," *Malaysiakini*, (March 8, 2015), Available at: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/291333>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Malaysia scored best in a subsection of educational attainment and access to health care.⁷⁰ An increase in job opportunities and women's budgeting brought pushed for equal access of women to education and healthcare services. Economic growth and Malaysia's focus on providing services and encouraging manufacturing sector helped to increase educational attainment for girls, equalizing chances for both genders.⁷¹



⁷⁰ Aminah Ahmad, "Women in Malaysia," *Asian Development Bank*, (December 1998), Available at: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32552/women-malaysia.pdf>

⁷¹ Ibid.

Chapter 2. Oil, Islam and Gender Inequality in Middle East and North Africa

This chapter is going to further examine the relationship between oil revenues, Islamist religiosity and gender inequality in Middle East and North Africa. Examination of literature review provided a solid foundation, proving correlation and causality between variables. The theoretical framework in this chapter describes the way how oil and religion are affecting gender inequality index inside of MENA countries. The results of quantitative researches reviewed from existing literature will serve for the implication of case of Malaysia, which will be studied as a counter-argument, mitigating negative consequences of oil and religion in the next chapters.

As was indicated in introductory part of this thesis, MENA has suffered to reach socio-economic improvements even due to the fact that oil reserves in the region represent more than 60% of whole global oil reserves.⁷² The term of MENA covers an extensive region, extending from Morocco all the way to Iran; the population of the region is estimated to be overreaching 381 million people, constituting approximately 6% of world population.⁷³

Middle East and North Africa is often defined and consisted out of Muslim countries; all the countries in the region except Israel, are Muslim majority states.⁷⁴ “The acronym is sometimes analogous to the term “Greater Middle East”, coined by the second Bush administration to refer to the area of the Middle East and also other majority Muslim countries such as Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan.”⁷⁵ However, for purposes of this thesis, the selection of

⁷² PEW Research Centre, “Middle East-North Africa Overview,” *PEW*, (October 7, 2009), Available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population10>

⁷³ PEW Research Centre, “Middle East-North Africa Overview,” *PEW*

⁷⁴ Dan Donovan, “Politics and Islam in Central Asia and MENA,” *International Policy Digest*, (April 24, 2012) Available at: <https://intpolicydigest.org/2012/04/24/politics-and-islam-in-central-asia-and-mena/>

⁷⁵ Istizada, “MENA Region Countries List 2017,” *Istizada*, (2017), Available at: <http://istizada.com/mena-region/>

countries, fitting within conditions of being majority Muslim petro states, there is a need to narrow down the selection of the countries inside and outside of the MENA region as table 1.1 indicates.

Paradoxically, as introduction chapter suggested, that incoming wealth from natural resources did not bring positive fortune for women status in predominantly MENA countries. Therefore, this part of the thesis will make a theoretical link between oil and gender inequality, drawing a correlation between these variables to find out how oil can negatively influence women's status in the society. The way of how oil is influencing gender inequality index will serve for further exploration of different counter variables, mitigating negative consequences of oil revenues in Malaysia, serving as counter-argument. Thus to discover the connection between oil and greater gender gap, this thesis will explain the economic model, Dutch Disease Theory, explaining the phenomenon of the negative correlation between oil dependency and gender inequality.

2.1 Dutch Disease and its consequences on gender inequality in MENA

“Oil and oil-related products account for about three quarters of the region's exports and about 40 percent of world exports of these products, pushing labor force to grow faster than total population; moreover, female participation rates remain very low.”⁷⁶ MENA countries are poorly performing in almost every part of gender inequality indicator; the illiteracy and educational indicators are significantly more unfavourable for women, leading to fewer opportunities for female employment, feeding gender discrimination and keeping

⁷⁶ Mohamed A. El-Erian, Sena Eken, Susan Fennell, Jean-Pierre Chauffour; “Growth and Stability in the Middle East and North Africa,” *International Monetary Fund*, (March, 1996), Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/mena/04econ.htm>

highest gender inequality rates worldwide.⁷⁷ Therefore, Dutch disease theory is used in order to explain this phenomenon occurring inside of MENA region.

The term Dutch Disease was first used to describe the fact of the discovery of oil reserves in Netherlands, causing a huge influx of oil money coming into Dutch economy. One decade later, economists observed the negative effect of a booming oil sector, causing other sectors to decline. In a period of seven years of 1970 – 1977, unemployment increased from 1.1% to 5.1%, furthermore corporate investments were tumbling.⁷⁸ Exporting of gas had led to an influx of foreign currency, flowingly increasing demand for the guilder and thus made it stronger, making other parts of the economy less competitive at international markets.

Gas extraction is a relatively capital-intensive business, generating very few jobs; most of the jobs preferred rather males, due to the need for masculinity.⁷⁹ The Dutch managed to cure themselves of the disease by keeping interest rates low in order to promote investment into the other sectors to minimize unemployment, subsequently equalizing male and female labour, crimping future economic potential by economic diversification. However, countries in MENA region are not as successful in doing so.

“Reflecting the predominance of the oil sector, economic diversification is generally low in oil-exporting Arab countries.”⁸⁰ Dutch disease is keeping private sector considerably small and less significant compared to public one.⁸¹ This fact is remaining state institution powerful and less accountable against its own population, keeping people pacified by oil wealth redistribution. Money transfers together with traditional beliefs, influenced by religion are overall decreasing the will of women to work.

⁷⁷ Mohamed A. El-Erian, Sena Eken, Susan Fennell, Jean-Pierre Chauffour; “Growth and Stability in the Middle East and North Africa,” *International Monetary Fund*

⁷⁸ C.W., “What Dutch disease is, and why it's bad,” *The Economist* (Nov 5th 2014), Available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/11/economist-explains-2>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ C.W., “What Dutch disease is, and why it's bad,” *The Economist*

⁸¹ Erling R. Larsen, “Escaping the Natural Resource Curse and the Dutch Disease?,” (Berkeley University Press, 2002), p.14

On the same note oil dependency and the inability of MENA countries to diversify their economies might keep women status low in the following years.⁸² Since the oil sector is highly capital intensive and mostly does not generate a great amount of jobs; therefore the dominance of oil exports in MENA region is shaping the economic structure and cannot be a sustainable source of job opportunities for female labour force participation in this sector.⁸³ As Dutch disease suggests slow economic growth in oil abundant countries might be explained by women moving into the households, which are not anyhow contributing into the overall economy.⁸⁴ Women remove from working force, because of higher salaries, and household needs them more, decreasing female labour participation, leaving men to dominate the society in MENA.⁸⁵

Dutch Disease or also known as Resource curse theory offers an explanation of the phenomena particularly visible in Middle East and Northern Africa region, where enormous natural wealth didn't bring the expected socio-economic development. This theory refers to the idea of the sudden and large increases in country's income, having harmful consequences on the further economic development.⁸⁶ The term was first used in 1977—to describe the woes of the Dutch economy, by the newspaper *The Economist*.⁸⁷ Since then, this theory or rather said the economic model is widely used for the explanation of various economic cycles throughout the world.

The main assumption is that the country's currency is fixed and extra foreign currency flows into the country, being converted into local currency, and spent on goods that cannot be

⁸² Mohamed A. El-Erian, Sena Eken, Susan Fennell, Jean-Pierre Chauffour; "Growth and Stability in the Middle East and North Africa," *International Monetary Fund*

⁸³ International Monetary Fund, "Economic Diversification in Oil-Exporting Arab Countries," *Annual Meeting of Arab Ministers of Finance*, (Bahrain: April 2016), Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/np/pp/eng/2016/042916.pdf>

⁸⁴ Elisabeth Frederiksen, "Labor Mobility, Household Production and Dutch Disease," (May, 2007), Available at: http://www.feem-web.it/ess/ess07/files/frederiksen_fp.pdf

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Christine Ebrahimzadeh, "Dutch Disease: Wealth Managed Unwisely," *International Monetary Fund* (March 28, 2012), Available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/basics/dutch.htm>

⁸⁷ C.W., "What Dutch disease is, and why it's bad," *The Economist* (Nov 5th 2014), Available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/11/economist-explains-2>

traded across borders (construction, certain services and so forth). As foreign currency displaces local currency, the money supply rises and extra domestic demand pushes up domestic prices, causing an appreciation of the exchange rate: a unit of foreign currency now buys fewer services in the domestic economy than it did before.⁸⁸ As an overall effect, the country loses its competitiveness internationally. Traditional female manufacturing jobs cannot compete against by men driven oil industry due to an appreciation of local currency at the international market. Therefore, traditional local products are unable to profit and employ women.

The Middle Eastern countries after the 1970s, recorded sharp drop in their economic performance and productivity growth turned negative even though countries were receiving oil revenues into their state's budgets.⁸⁹ A wide range of explanations for this economic downturn at that time occurred, but the Dutch Disease theory seems to provide the most logical explanation for the economic crisis of Petro states. In addition, if the exchange rate is flexible, the huge supply of foreign currency "would drive up the value of the domestic currency, which also implies an appreciation in the real exchange rate, rising in the nominal exchange rate rather than a rise in domestic prices."⁹⁰ Thus in both cases, exchange rate appreciation decreases the competitiveness of the economy and the country's exports, causing traditional women's export sector to shrink. Consequently, it is decreasing female labor force participation, keeping gender inequality gap deep in MENA region.

The consequences that arise from the theory have an impact on the low political status of women in the Gulf region.⁹¹ Since more oil a country produces it makes harder for manufacturing companies to remain profitable. Therefore, the rise in the exchange rates makes imported goods cheaper; the factories that most likely hire women will be mostly hit

⁸⁸ C.W., "What Dutch disease is, and why it's bad," *The Economist*

⁸⁹ Roberto Zaghera, Gobind T. Nankani, "*Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reform*," (Washington: The World Bank, 2005), p.156

⁹⁰ Chhristine Ebrahimzadeh, "Dutch Disease: Wealth Managed Unwisely," *International Monetary Fund*

⁹¹ Michael L. Ross, "*The Oil Curse: How the Petroleum Wealth Shapes Development of the Nations*."

by the Dutch Disease. Consequently, the most of the jobs will be suitable for men (oil-based sector, construction, retail, and government) as female labour participation is pointing out in the region.⁹² Moreover, women due to higher income levels and also declining initiatives, caused by oil's social redistribution system of many countries inside of MENA region, encouraging women rather stay at household, not contributing into economy nor contributing into improving of women's status, as traditional beliefs together with economic situation are allowing for households to do so.⁹³

Despite the fact that Dutch disease theory logicity explains the process of gender inequality; there is a second factor or logic behind oil revenues causing women subordination which might help us to explain that oil revenues are producing large government incomes, encouraging women to stay at home. It is especially applicable with high oil prices internationally when government revenues raise tremendously, so does the amount of money in the households through welfare programs, subsidies, and tax cuts as it is observable in MENA region.⁹⁴ "This boost in household income can be good in many ways; but it also tends to discourage women from seeking work outside the home, since their family has less need for a second income. Daily life may be more comfortable, but also more strongly dominated by men."⁹⁵ Labour participation ration between man and women can be compared in MENA and Malaysia to see if this hypothesis can be applied in Malaysia.

In United Arab Emirates and recently in Saudi Arabia, there are signals of initiation to cure Dutch disease at national levels by investing into private sector structures in order to diversify the economies inside of MENA region. However, there are a lot of obstacles to overcome in near future. Some of the region's countries are striving to diversify their economies to use some of the gains from higher oil prices have been invested into the

⁹² Michael L. Ross, "*The Oil Curse: How the Petroleum Wealth Shapes Development of the Nations.*"

⁹³ Elisabeth Frederiksen, "Labor Mobility, Household Production and Dutch Disease," (May, 2007), Available at: http://www.feem-web.it/ess/ess07/files/frederiksen_fp.pdf

⁹⁴ Micheal L. Ross, "Oil, Islam, and Women," *American Political Science Review*

⁹⁵ Micheal L. Ross, "Oil, Islam, and Women," p. 109-110

domestic economy; United Arab Emirates investment was mainly in real estate, crowding out other sectors of the economy, causing new real estate disease to happen.⁹⁶ Therefore, changing the whole model in both countries requires some drastic adjustments to be done. As population got used to the fact of living on governmental subsidies, not paying taxes, what created a disincentive to work. This redistribution of oil's money made structural change difficult and unpopular to happen, by reducing public subsidies. However, these changes would also require increase into workfare including female labour participation, what might be a positive signal for women to increase their gender status in the society through work, gaining financial independence inside of households.⁹⁷

Another alarming fact of MENA is that majority of the governments are nondemocratic, even if the countries possess with democratic state structures, the weak political opposition and weak enforcement of rule of law are keeping government corrupted and not accountable in front of their own population, causing the basic state functional troubles. As quantitative research pointed out that researches found a significant correlation between nondemocratic regimes and gender inequality status; less democratic regimes have a tendency to have a deeper gender gap. However, discriminatory politics in Malaysia has a still significant role to play even nowadays, many times rule of law is hardly enforced, undermining the values of democracy in Malaysia. On the other side Malaysian population is highly involved in politics. Citizens are paying taxes, holding the government to act more accountable in front of their own population.⁹⁸

The Dutch Disease Theory serves as a useful explanation of how oil revenues can undermine the position of women in the society by economic factors, causing deep gender

⁹⁶ Financial Times, "Opinion: UAE 'Dutch Disease' offers lesson," *Financial Times*, (February 21, 2016), Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/ef972c46-4ad1-11de-87c2-00144feabdc0>

⁹⁷ Institut Montaigne, "Saudi Arabia: Curing the Dutch disease," *Montaigne*, (November 27, 2017), Available at: <http://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/saudi-arabia-curing-dutch-disease#>

⁹⁸ Jeffrey Hays, "Minorities, Ethnic Issues, Discrimination and Government Policies in Malaysia," (June, 2015), Available at: http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Malaysia/sub5_4c/entry-3644.html

gaps in countries possessing with significant oil reserves and less diversified economies, leaving MENA countries highly dependent on oil revenues, undermining the way to democracy. Furthermore, the oil revenues as a contribution into national GDPs differ and also oil income per capita differs country to country; therefore it is important to distinguish current economic situation of MENA and Malaysia as being a counter-argument to the negative consequences of oil. The next chapter of this thesis will look at the developments of the oil revenues in majority Muslim petro states; but before heading to this section, it is also important to summarize negative consequences of religiosity, undermining gender equality in MENA.

The exports as a percentage of merchandise exports, pointing at the countries which might possibly be infected by resource curse disease by fuel export dependency. It is obvious that many countries located inside of MENA are included within top 25 exporters, and also Malaysia fits into these criteria, pointing on the importance of oil as a vital source of national income of GDP.

Examination of literature review also pointed out that oil wealth directly correlates with the low political influence of women in the Arab oil-producing states. Moreover, the available evidence seems to suggest that the Dutch Disease theory is a useful theoretical tool for explaining this phenomenon in MENA. However, can Dutch disease also explain the situation in Malaysia, dragging women emancipation downwards? The further chapters will review if the oil had the same effect in Malaysia or if some other variables were causing the mitigation of negative consequences, making Malaysian's women more empowered compared to women living in one of the countries located in MENA.

2.2 Religion and its consequences on gender inequality in MENA

Religion is too high extent interrelated to sociology, shaping a person's view of life and world as a whole. Religious beliefs are powerful forces penetrating deeply into sociology, creating images of normative principles of how the world should be, transforming it into reality. These forces might also build up the normative roles in gender studies, prescribing the roles of men and women in religious societies. Even nowadays, rationalists are failing to explain why strong religious powers still prevail in the twenty-first century, creating a place for rational explanations based on scientific researches. However, even due to the fact that science is proving them wrong, believers still tend to be sceptical towards scientific explanations, influencing behavior and ideas of the believers. Importantly, the status of women in society is an outcome of the interpretation of religious texts penetrating deeply into society even nowadays, and of the cultural and institutional settings of religious communities.⁹⁹ Gender inequality as the form of social inequality between genders is visible not only in Muslim majority countries, but no different extent in the whole world.

Therefore, when Islam describes the role of women in Islam as subordinate, this draws normative images of different roles of gender in Islamist society, changing traditions and development of the culture for centuries. In authors point of view based on his direct observation from Malaysian society, workings of Islamist religion are indirectly responsible for causing gender inequality in the society, by influencing traditions, which became part of Muslim culture, even due the fact that Quran many times try to protect and advantage women's status in society, but development of patriarchal writings and patriarchal visions transformed way of how Islam is perceived among society nowadays.

⁹⁹ Kamila Klingorova and Tomáš Havlicek, "Religion and gender inequality: The status of women in the societies of world religions," *Moravian Geographical Reports* 2/2015, Vol. 23 (Prague: February, 2015), p.3-5

Conservative traditions prevailing regarding faith, and as was mentioned in the literature review, they strictly apply towards the women rather than men.¹⁰⁰ These facts possibly have negative consequences by spreading religious beliefs into everyday interactions, impacting women's status in the society. "Majority of men in Middle East believe a woman's place is in the home."¹⁰¹ This old conservative views in MENA countries shaped by religion are keeping long distance for not only men, but whole society to fully accept and support equality of women in MENA region, as in many parts of the world."¹⁰² The vast majority of the population of Middle East and North Africa views gender inequality as a mixture of long traditions and the possible fault of undermining women opportunities.¹⁰³

As literature review uncovered from interviews conducted in Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine, men are the one who are bringing financial resources home, therefore perceiving women's role as staying home and taking care of kids and household, paralyzing participation of the women in social and public life outside of their homes.¹⁰⁴ Together with assumptions from the previous section that oil's money are redistributed into households, keeping women inside of their homes. Therefore, the oil reliance mixed together with Islamist religion is strongly affiliated with the low status of women, affecting MENA countries to a high extent based on secondary sources retrieved out of literature review.

Rich literature review uncovered a significant correlation between religiosity, especially Islamist religiosity and gender inequality. Existing empirical results indicating that the greater the degree of religiosity in particular state, the more negative results for gender inequality, impacting even economic growth what is indirectly diminishing job opportunities

¹⁰⁰ Ankita Singh, "Why Religion Is The Hardest Barrier Women Must Overcome For Gender Equality," *Elite Daily*, (March 9, 2016), Available at: <http://elitedaily.com/women/religion-women-barrier-equality/1412604/>

¹⁰¹ Kate Lyons, "Majority of men in Middle East survey believe a woman's place is in the home," *The Guardian* (May 2, 2017), Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/may/02/majority-of-men-in-middle-east-north-africa-survey-believe-a-womans-place-is-in-the-home>

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ankita Singh, "Why Religion Is The Hardest Barrier Women Must Overcome For Gender Equality"

¹⁰⁴ Kate Lyons, "Majority of men in Middle East survey believe a woman's place is in the home," *The Guardian*

for women, decreasing gender inequality.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, literature review pointed out that Islamist religiosity is hurting the women more than any other religion.¹⁰⁶ The goal of this thesis is to not explore why, but it is to examine differences between Muslim majority petro states and provide counter argument by analyzing a case study of Malaysia. This country is relatively gender equal, possessing with counter mitigating variables, diminishing the negative effects of oil revenues and Islamist religiosity to a certain point.

This thesis already unveiled the problematic to measure Islamic religiosity, because there are too many components of religion, making to capture to what extent religious beliefs influence individuals from a social perspective. Pooling many aspects of Islamic religiosity was used to come up with the overall table above, comparing Muslim majority countries and level of their Islamicity. According to the table, Malaysia scored as the best rated country among all Muslim majority petro states, although, the author is aware of the fact that if other variables of measuring Islamicity would be taken into consideration, it would change the rating of countries displayed inside of the table. Regarding this fact, it is still predictable that Muslims in Malaysia have a more liberal point of view compared to countries in MENA. Chapter IV is going to elaborate what is the reason behind it, by identification of counter mitigating variables influencing gender inequality index.

Before turning to the following chapter, the author finds useful to provide a visual explanation of the visibility of oil dependency, the percentile of population affiliated to Islam and gender inequality index in order to provide facts putting individual countries closer or further from each other when taking into consideration these particular variables. The maps

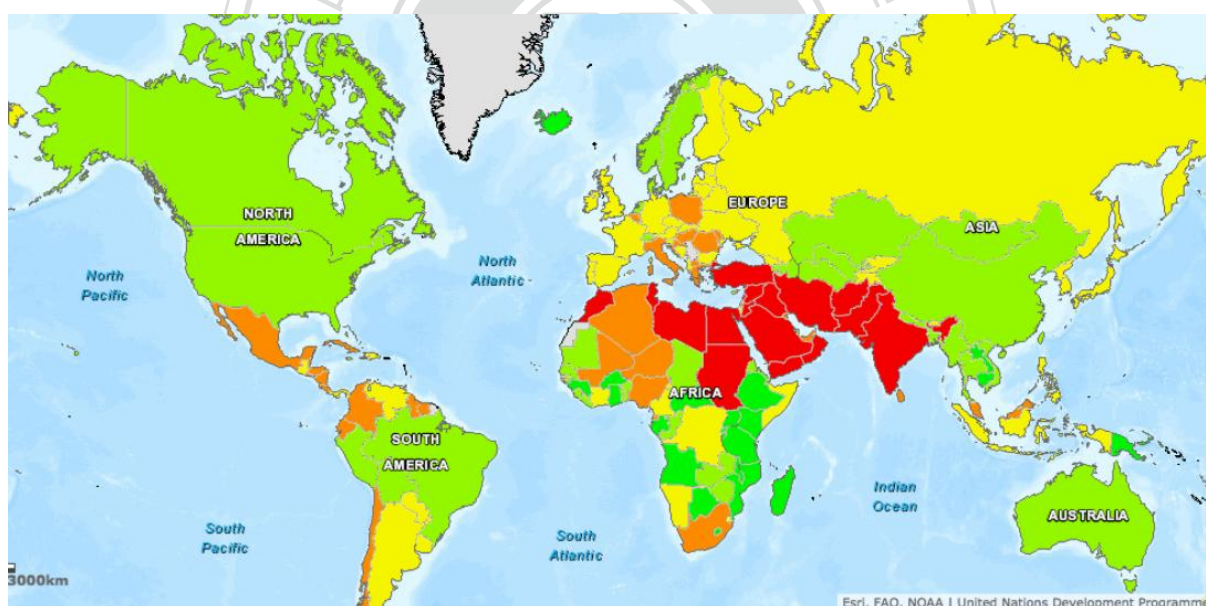
¹⁰⁵ Stephanie Seguino and James Lovinsky, "The Impact of Religiosity on Gender Attitudes and Outcomes," University of Vermont, (Feb. 24, 2009), Available at: <http://www.uvm.edu/~sseguino/pdf/Religiosity.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ David P. Stump, "Book Review: Evolution and Religious Creation Myths: How Scientists Respond," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, (December 29, 2009)
Kamila Klingorova, Tomáš Havlicek, "Religion and gender inequality: The status of women in the societies of world religions,"
Jean Holm, "Women in Religion," (Bloomsbury Academic – 1994)

provide a good explanation of the high correlation between the degree of religiosity and highest values of gender inequality in MENA region.

The maps also provide a good visual representation of gender inequality among countries based on gender inequality index from the year of 2012. States in red represent high gender inequality above 0.60 and higher towards green colour, where there is greater equality lesser than 0.15; therefore countries in green have a lower gender inequality index. It clearly shows that countries in MENA region are worst compared to other countries across the world. Other Muslim majority countries located outside of MENA region are doing relatively better.

Map 2.1 Gender Inequality Index, UNDP – 2014



Source: United Nations Development Programme – 2014

The most recent Global Gender Gap Report of 2017, benchmarks 144 countries according to their progress towards gender parity across four thematic dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. Among Muslim majority countries, the best are doing European Balkan

countries – Albania (62) and Bosnia and Herzegovina followed by Bangladesh (72). Malaysia scored 106th, right behind its Muslim majority neighbour – Indonesia (92).¹⁰⁷ These two South East Asian Muslim majority countries are leaving behind all the rest of countries located in MENA region. It is also important to mention that even due to the fact that Indonesia scored better than Malaysia; however, Indonesia is by population biggest Muslim country, but does not possess with a high value of oil income per capita. Therefore, Malaysia is more suitable country as a counter argument towards countries located in MENA.

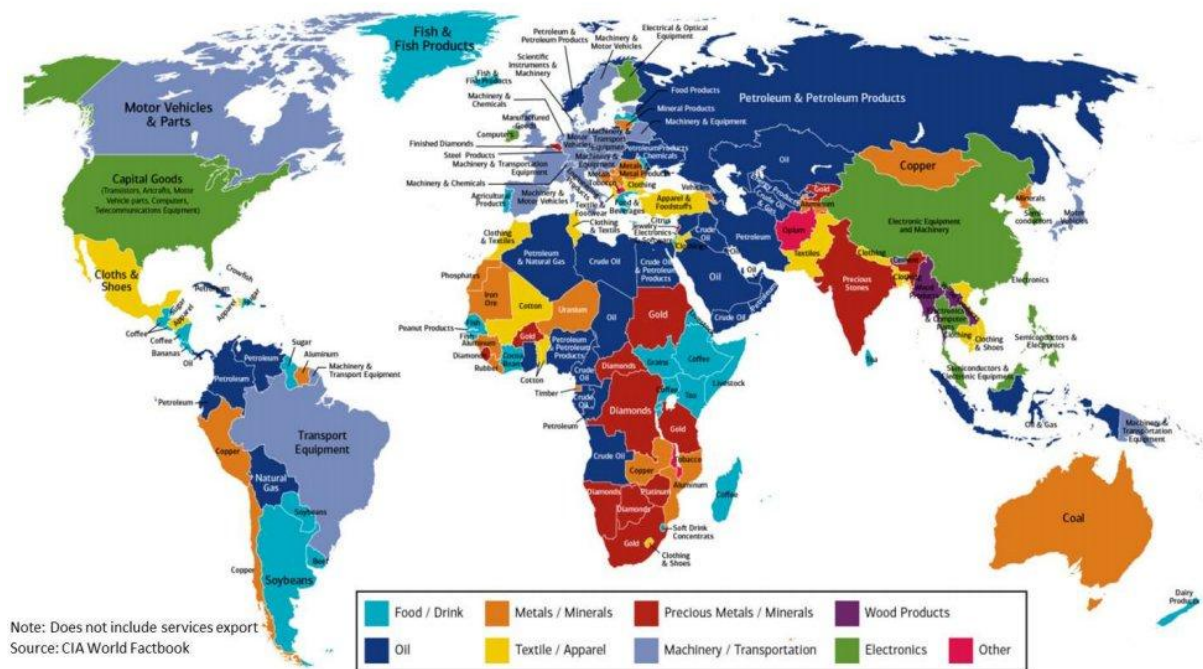
Out of 26 worst ranking countries, 16 of them are majority Muslim countries located in MENA region.¹⁰⁸ The importance of this thesis is to initially explain the variables causing the highest rates of gender inequality in majority Muslim countries, especially ones located in the region of North Africa and Middle East and later on to analyze the difference within Muslim majority countries inside and outside of MENA based on the case study of Malaysia. Malaysia managed to keep progress on closing gaps in women's labour participation and estimated earned income, closing to full extent secondary education enrolment gap, improved status of women in the society.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ World Economic Report, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2017," WEF, (2017). Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR16/WEF_Global_Gender_Gap_Report_2017.pdf

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

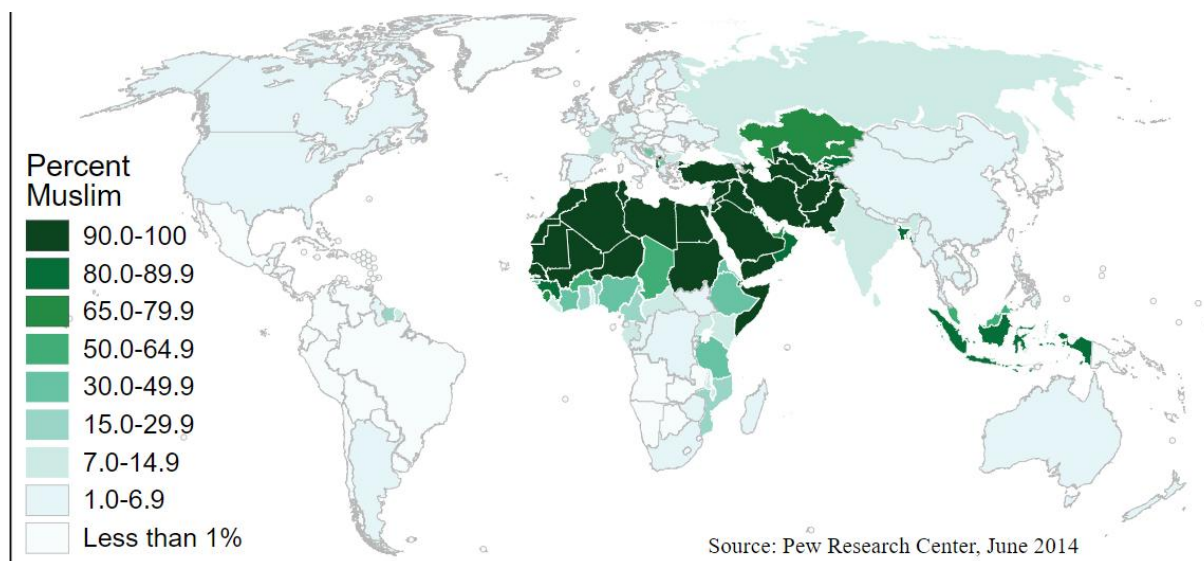
Map 2.2 Countries' Commodities Dependency – 2016



Source: CIA World Fact Book

This global map of economic dependency on the mainstream countries' industry can give us a clue of the high dependency of oil in MENA region. Malaysia as our case study nowadays poses with capability of providing revenues from diversifies economic flows, moving country out of oil dependency. This fact is visible on the oil economic indicators of oil income per capita or the percentile of oil contribution into GDP. Since fluctuation of global oil prices affects the percentile which oil contributes into countries' GDP greatly vary annually, so it is hard to define Malaysia as a petro state due to the diversification of their economy in latest years. Based on oil income per capita, Malaysia is still ranked in top 30 countries performing, jumping before couple of countries located in MENA region. Significant oil's contribution of oil into economy is still making credible example out of Malaysia.

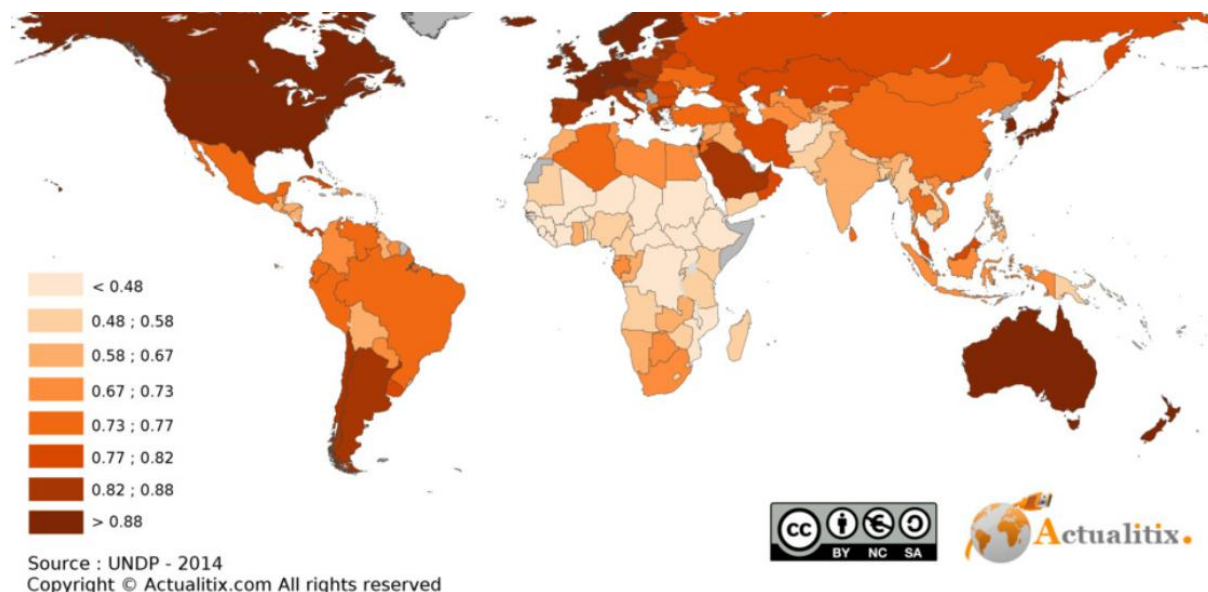
Map 2.3 Percentage of Muslim Population in Individual Countries – 2014



Source: Pew Research Centre

The map constructed by PEW research, displays the disparity of Muslim population in the world, according to the percentage of Muslim population living in particular country. The most of the Muslim majority countries are located in North Africa and Middle East region. Central Asia is another region with high percentage of Muslim population living in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. However, the difference is that women in this region can enjoy the higher levels of gender equality compared to MENA. Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina are European countries with significant Muslim population over 50%, where women are doing the best in terms of gender equality towards their male counterparts among all the others majority Muslim countries around the world. South East Asian countries of Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and East Timor are majority Muslim countries, possessing with significant oil reserves, but on the other side, they can manage to fulfil gender inequality gap faster than countries of MENA.

Map 3.4 Gender Equality Index Map – 2014



Source: United Nations Development Programme – 2014

Based on the various maps, the basic assumptions can be made that oil reliance mixed together with Islamist religion is strongly affiliated with low status of women, affecting MENA countries to high extent. Therefore, the following chapters will mainly deal with question of why Malaysia can still perform better in terms of gender equality than any other country located inside of MENA region. Even due to fact, they share the common status of Muslim majority Petro states, possessing with significant reserves of oil, having Muslim majority population, downgrading status of women. The following chapter of thesis will qualitatively examine variables which are mitigating negative consequences of oil and Islamist religion, keeping gender gap relatively equal in Malaysia.

As a greater degree of religiosity causing greater gender inequality, therefore the important task of this thesis will be the evaluation of the level of Islamist religiosity in Malaysia as it might be valuable asset to find out answer on the question why Malaysian women can enjoy higher gender status than women living in one of the MENA country. The author will examine the impact of Islamist religiosity in Chapter IV by redistributing

questionnaires and conducting interviews. Furthermore, the results might be compared with the results of already existing data, conducted from particular countries in MENA region. This might help us to compare results, finding mitigating variables, making Malaysia relatively gender equal country compared to MENA region.

2.5 Conclusion

The Middle East and North African region has the most conservative population affiliated to Islam; unable to close deepest gender gaps worldwide, even due to the fact that oil reserves in the region represent more than 60% of whole global reserves, bringing tremendous oil revenues into the region. Thus, this chapter of thesis examined the relationship between oil revenues, Islamist religiosity and gender inequality in Middle East and North Africa, providing a solid foundation, proving correlation and causality between variables. A theoretical framework of Dutch disease explained and described the negative consequences of oil and Islamist religiosity, affecting gender inequality index inside of these countries. The empirical case studies proved the validity of the theory, pointing out that oil and Islam have a tremendous impact on the status of women in MENA.

This chapter also provided an explanation of the visibility of oil dependency with lack of economic diversification, causing a low level of female labour force participation, having an effect on highest rates of gender inequality inside of MENA region. The different levels of Islamist religiosity in various Muslim majority petro states were visible as well. Together with knowledge from literature review, the author can conclude that conservative Islamist's perceptions of women are dragging down status of women in MENA. Non-democratic regimes are also distributing oil's social welfare, and together with Islamist beliefs supporting women to stay inside of their homes.

Reviewing of characteristics of MENA countries served as a valuable asset, obtaining differences among Muslim majority petro states. These characteristics are putting individual countries closer or further from each other, finding counter mitigating variables, which might be lessening negative effects of oil and religion in case of Malaysia. The following knowledge together with theoretical framework and literature review are describing, how oil and Islamist religiosity is impacting gender inequality in majority Muslim Petro states. This logic is going to be implemented into the case of Malaysia, serving as counter-argument that the impact of independent variables differs in certain countries.

As literature review suggests oil and religion are highly correlated with gender inequality index, dragging women status at the bottom of world's standards. The analytical part of this thesis will provide implications of these assumptions into the case of Malaysia, a country possessing with oil reserves and majority Muslim population where gender inequality is not as visible as in more conservative MENA countries. Therefore, the importance of this paper will be to answer why Malaysian women can enjoy lower gender inequality index than other majority Muslim Petro states, by examining the counter variables, mitigating negative forces of oil and Islam.

Chapter 3 Oil and Women's Status in Malaysia

This chapter will identify the negative consequences of the oil revenues on gender inequality index in Malaysia. However, Malaysia is possessing significant oil reserves, but women's status is considerably better compared average of MENA. Therefore, this chapter will not only evaluate the effect of oil revenues on women's status in Malaysia by implying Dutch disease theory, but it will also provide mitigating variables reducing the negative effect of oil revenues on gender inequality index in Malaysia. Before turning to an examination of oil's negative effects, it is important to introduce Malaysia as a petro state, overviewing the development of oil industry over the recent years, having a potential impact on gender inequality.

This part of the thesis will provide validity for the hypothesis taken from the case of MENA countries, where higher oil revenues are bringing fewer women into the workforce, making women's status less vulnerable compared to their males' counterparts. The author is going to proof assumptions, that less oil is decreasing the level of negative workings of Dutch disease. Therefore, Malaysia should have higher female labour participation compared to countries located in MENA region, making women in Malaysia more empowered. As the previous chapter suggested that MENA is lacking economic diversification, relying just on oil resources. This chapter is going to examine the impact of economic diversification in Malaysia, if this variable is capable to mitigate the negative consequences of oil, making Malaysian women more equal.

3.1 Malaysia as a Petro State

There are only four Muslim majority Petro states outside of MENA; Kazakhstan, Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia. However, due to the fluctuation of oil prices and different rates of development of economic diversification, countries keep gaining or losing the status of being petro-state. It is important to control variables influencing our focus group of Muslim majority Petro states over time. Moreover, it is fundamental for further research to observe the scheme of development of gender inequality index side by side with oil revenues contribution into nation's GDP. This chapter is going to review oil contribution into GDP together with gender inequality index retrospectively in order to evaluate their development and make a comparison. Focusing on oil's contribution into GDP at the early 1990s, at the time when Malaysia was considered a member of petro states; however, the further economic changes deprived Malaysia out of membership nowadays.

Moreover, it is important to emphasize that Malaysia is included within these group of countries by measuring of oil income per capita indicator, since prices of oil dropped and Malaysia diversified its economy, it is not considered as petro state anymore, yet still possessing with significant oil revenues by dividing its oil wealth by number of its population. In that case, Malaysia indicates higher numbers of oil income per capita than some of the petro states inside of MENA region, gaining membership by overcoming threshold by oil contribution into GDP by more than 10% of its overall output.¹¹⁰

Regarding the other three Muslim majority petro states, located outside of MENA region, Kazakhstan according to oil income per capita indicator is doing better than average in terms of oil profits. However, Islamic religiosity is too low to include Kazakhstan as credible counter-argument case study. In terms of oil income per capita, Brunei as Muslim majority

¹¹⁰ Micheal L. Ross, "Oil, Islam, and Women," *American Political Science Review*, (New York, 2008)

state is ranked as 4th best. On the other hand, in terms of gender inequality index is not doing significantly better than the average gender inequality index score of MENA countries. Therefore, it will not be a credible counter case study. Indonesia scored slightly better than Malaysia according to recent global gender gap reports. However, Indonesia is by population biggest Muslim country, but does not possess with a high value of oil income per capita. Indonesia ranked as the last out of our focus group of Muslim majority petro states. Contributing with a significant value of crude oil and level of Islamist religiosity, Malaysia is the most suitable country out of all Muslim majority petro states outside of MENA region, serving as a counter argument towards countries located in MENA.

3.1.1 Malaysian Economy and Politics

As the various assumptions drawn from literature review provided the prediction, that women living in more economically developed countries can enjoy relatively higher gender status in the society. Due to this fact, it is important to have a quick overview of Malaysian economy. Malaysia has relatively, globally integrated economy and newly industrialized market economy; it is considered as an upper middle-income country with annual GDP growth of average 6.5% from 1957 to 2005.¹¹¹ Since the 1970s, the economy itself was capable to transform from a producer of raw materials into a multi-sector economy, which allowed the country to attract foreign direct investments, pushing country more into high tech economy. The future prospects of Malaysian economy are leaning on current Prime Minister Najib in power; his economic transformation program is attempting to achieve high-income

¹¹¹ United States State Department, "Malaysia," (14 July 2010), Retrieved Sept. 14, 2010
Boulton, William; Pecht, Michael; Tucker, William; Wennberg, Sam; "Electronics Manufacturing in the Pacific Rim, World Technology Evaluation Center, Chapter 4: Malaysia," *The World Technology Evaluation Center, Inc.*, (May 1997)
Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook," CIA, (last updated: Nov 14, 2017), Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>

status by 2020 and to move further up the value-added production chain by attracting investments in high technology, knowledge-based industries, and services by investing into infrastructure and human capital.¹¹²

The Najib's administration is continuing to promote a vision of former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed's vision of 2020, by boosting domestic demand and on the other hand, reducing the export dependency.¹¹³ Nevertheless, nowadays the country is still heavily dependent on oil and gas exports; the oil and gas sector supplied about 22% of government revenue out of export in 2015, due to the significant drop of the oil prices from prior years and government efforts to diversify the economy, nowadays ratio of these mineral resources into federal budget declined significantly.¹¹⁴ However, examination of oil income per capita is placing Malaysia within top 25 countries around the world. According to this indicator, Malaysia is passing some of MENA petro states. Therefore, Malaysia is still considered as an oil-dependent country.

3.2 Economic Diversification

Consisting of two regions, separated by the South China Sea into two similarly sized regions, Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Malaysian Borneo), sharing borders with Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei; surrounded by South China Sea and Adman Sea. This strategic location is providing an access to Bengal Bay through Strait of Malacca, which was already discovered by Portuguese in 1511 when Melaka was conquered by Portugal.¹¹⁵ In 1641, Dutch took influence over the Peninsula in order to use this strategic location, providing

¹¹² Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook," *CIA*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ United States State Department, "Malaysia," (14 July 2010), Retrieved Sept. 14, 2010

¹¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations With Malaysia," (February 25, 2016), Available at: <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2777.htm>

safe passage for their trading purposes. “During the late 18th and 19th centuries, Great Britain established colonies and protectorates in the area of current Malaysia; in 1948, the British-ruled territories on the Malay Peninsula except Singapore formed the Federation of Malaya, which became independent in 1957.”¹¹⁶

After the country gained its own independence, Malaysia was considered as a low-income economy.¹¹⁷ The country was mostly depended on the export of agricultural products; rubber and tin’s production still remained dominant even after more than a decade of its independence.¹¹⁸ “For most of the 1950s and 1960s, the main development issue was the dependence of the economy on natural rubber, production of tin and hydrocarbon resources.”¹¹⁹ Private companies were small, family-based and not governmentally supported, and making hard way for privatization of the economic sectors. Therefore, economic diversification of economy was the key issue of Malaysian long-term plan to lower poverty and decrease level of dependency on natural resources.¹²⁰

Moreover, due to several powerful, economic and political forces, coupled with growing economic nationalism in Malaysia culminating in the New Economic Policy (NEP), PETRONAS was incorporated in 1974, giving an exclusive power and ownership over countries’ hydrocarbon resources under the direct purview of Prime Minister.¹²¹ Since then, PETRONAS is one of the driving forces behind the Malaysian economy, and its importance as a source of government revenue has grown enormously ever since.¹²² Malaysia’s crude oil export reached almost one-quarter of whole export within less than one decade, adding

¹¹⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook,” *CIA*, (last update: Nov 14, 2017), Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>

¹¹⁷ Zainal Aznam Yusof and Deepak Bhattasali, “Economic Growth and Development in Malaysia: Policy Making and Leadership,” *The World Bank*, (Washington D.C.: 2008), p.3

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Bank Pembangunan, “Report on Malaysia Oil and Gas Exploration and production,” (2011), Available at: <http://www.bpmb.com.my/documents/21475/33700/20.pdf/3723eecd-5976-4fd2-9b10-c1375fbdd4cc>

¹²² *Ibid.*

country into the group of petro states. However, Malaysian oil as many other natural exporting business was leaving for privatization. The government left with no much of space for decision making and possible way for moving to an authoritarian regime, supported by oil's money as happened in many countries of MENA region.

During the 22-years' term of Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad (1981-2003), Malaysia was successful in diversifying its economy from dependence on exports of raw materials and natural resources to the development of manufacturing, services, and tourism; playing role as a counterbalancing action of negative consequences of oil incomes, as observable in the case of MENA.”¹²³ Prime Minister continued these pro-business policies, supporting the private sector, leading towards further economic diversification of Malaysia. The success of economic diversification from the beginning of Prime Minister Mahathir's governance is also visible on the development of economic complexity index.

In 1985, Malaysia's dependency on oil reserves was at the peak. Malaysia's oil export presented almost one-quarter of whole export. However, Malaysia managed to escape in front of Dutch disease by supporting small and medium enterprises together with other economic diversification policy implications. A Southeast Asian trend of economic transition from the export dependency of one commodity to the export of many commodities pressured Malaysia to diversify the economy as well. Malaysian economic policymaking during this period expressed the boldness and vision of government planners and their ability to mobilize support for “experiments” in both the government budget as well as from private investors, betting on economic diversification as a Malaysian economic way for progress.¹²⁴

¹²³ Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook,” *CIA*

¹²⁴ Zainal Aznam Yusof and Deepak Bhattasali, “Economic Growth and Development in Malaysia: Policy Making and Leadership,” *The World Bank*, (Washington D.C.: 2008), p.5

Malaysian government was highly motivated to push for industrialization, due to quickly changing the external environment, affecting domestic economy and previous experiences of weaker performance of both: non-resource and resource-based industries.¹²⁵ Prime Minister Mahathir's New Economic Policy (NEP) had solutions how to overcome these problems of economic sartorial dependency. During the mid-1980s, when Malaysia was considered as resource depended country; NEP boosted massive public spending into the private sector, pulling the country down to 10% of annual public debts.¹²⁶ In the 1980s, export of resources remained an important part of the Malaysian economy; moreover, Mahathir's government put in front the importance of the private sector. It was considered as a first step of liberalizing trade by adopting Adam Smith's invisible hand of the market, downsizing role of government to implement his vision of NEP.¹²⁷

The NEP helped to increase efficiency by applying more liberal trading rules, encouraging the private sector to grow, and consequently increasing the efficiency of the aggregate economy. Malaysia's fast economic growth brought with itself many developments as transparency of government policies, its highly skilled workforce, developed infrastructure, and efficient bureaucracy.¹²⁸ These improvements positively affected the socioeconomic situation in the country, having a positive influence on female labour force participation by increasing efficiency of economics by bringing women into workplaces. Transformation of the aggregate economy into more highly skilled labour, helped to close gender gaps in all

¹²⁵ Zainal Aznam Yusof and Deepak Bhattasali, "Economic Growth and Development in Malaysia: Policy Making and Leadership," *The World Bank*, (Washington D.C.: 2008), p.5

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Jeffrey Hays, "Malaysian Economy – Mahastir and Asian Financial Crisis," (2008), Available at: http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Malaysia/sub5_4e/entry-3694.html

¹²⁸ Economic Transformation Programme, "New Economic Model of Malaysia," (Kuala Lumpur: 2010), Available at: http://etp.pemandu.gov.my/upload/etp_handbook_chapter_1-4_economic_model.pdf

educational levels, lowering gender inequality index in Malaysia, as is observable at gender gap report of 2016.¹²⁹

Economic development and diversification of economy helped to close the gender gaps in education and labour market.¹³⁰ “Women’s labour force participant depends on whether a job is needed, whether a job can be obtained and whether having a job is considered acceptable.”¹³¹ Consideration of acceptability for women having a job under certain religious constraints will be discussed in next chapter, talking about Islamist religiosity influencing women’s status in Malaysia. However, there are some assumptions of economic development in terms of diversification of the economy, affecting female labour force participation, comparing the economic growth with female labour participation suggesting a positive correlation between those two variables.

¹²⁹ World Economic Report, “The Global Gender Gap Report 2016,” WEF. (2017), Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ma Qinfen, “Female Labour Force Participation in Malaysia: Time-series Evidence,” *South East Asia Journal of Contemporary Business, Economics and Law*, Vol. 14, (Dec 3, 2017), Available at: <http://seajbel.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ECON-51.pdf>

Table 3.2 Percentage of Distribution of Women Labour Force (over Total Labour Force) by Sector (1970 – 2000)

Sector	1970	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock and Fishing	38.0	39.0	38.4	34.4	28.6	26.8
Mining and Quarrying	12.6	10.3	10.5	12.9	17.9	13.0
Manufacturing	28.1	40.1	43.1	46.4	42.8	41.1
Construction	5.3	7.5	3.4	6.9	6.5	6.0
Electricity, Gas and Water	6.7	7.1	5.6	4.3	9.6	9.5
Transport, Storage and Communication	18.2	29.3	37.4	38.6	12.1	13.1
Wholesale and Retail Trade, Hotels and Restaurants	4.3	6.3	10.4	11.1	38.7	39.3
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Business services	-	29.5	35.1	34.2	39.9	39.9
Community, Social and Personal Services; Public Administration; and Other Services	-	29.4	36.8	37.9	40.0	45.3

Source: Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1991 and Eight Malaysia Plan, 2001.

Source: Nor'Aznin Abu Bakar and Norehan Abdullah, "Labor Force Participation of women in Malaysia," http://repo.uum.edu.my/2469/1/Nor%E2%80%99Aznin_Abu_Bakar.pdf

The NEP and its massive governmental public spending, help in process of diversifying the economy, positively affecting female labour force participation. This process promoted women to a high extent in order to aspire in manufacturing and service sectors. (table 3.2) However, the growth of female labour force participation culminated in the mid-1990s and it started to decline in 2000 (female percentage of total labour stopped at 41.1%); it can be explained by high oil prices and investment into ICTs, increasing demand for high skilled labour.¹³² Malaysia recently managed to close gender gaps in education to the full extent.¹³³ It proves

¹³² Nor'Aznin Abu Bakar and Norehan Abdullah, "Labor Force Participation of women in Malaysia," http://repo.uum.edu.my/2469/1/Nor%E2%80%99Aznin_Abu_Bakar.pdf

¹³³ World Economic Report, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2016," WEF. (2017), Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf

the will of government overcoming the problems of Dutch disease in order to focus on economic sufficiency.

Moreover, even due to a recent close of the gender gap in education, women are still facing the problem of stereotyping in the society, what might be indirectly caused by Islamist religion; segregating women in occupational sectors and gender hierarchies in the distribution of men and women into particular jobs.¹³⁴ Consequently, wage inequalities based on different genders, causing gender inequality index to drop, even due to the fact that in comparison to countries of MENA, female labour force participation in Malaysia is diametrically higher. Moreover, the issue of segregating women in occupational sectors will be discussed in following chapters of Islam and women in Malaysia.

Although, by comparing female labour force participation in MENA region and Malaysia, the comparison is pointing on the major differences. Based on these assumptions, different rates of female labour force participation, consequently affecting gender inequality index. “Female labour force participation rate in Malaysia has kept positive growth, and the number of female workers towards male workers doubled between 1970 and 1995, after implementation of Malaysia’s economic diversification plan; while the labour force participation rate remained relatively unchanged after 1985 at the level of 45% of women working towards men in Malaysia.”¹³⁵ On the other hand, between 1980 to 2010 averages of MENA’s

¹³⁴ Nor’Azni Abu Bakar and Norehan Abdullah, “Labor Force Participation of women in Malaysia” http://repo.uum.edu.my/2469/1/Nor%E2%80%99Azni_Abu_Bakar.pdf

¹³⁵ Ibid.

female labour force participation ranged between 15% to 20.6 %, significantly lower compared to Malaysia.¹³⁶

United Arab Emirates, as a country with highest economic complexity index within states located in MENA region, is still significantly lacking behind Malaysian economic complexity index, pointing on the fact that MENA countries are dependent on the oil resources to the higher extent. Therefore, by comparing the role of oil on gender inequality between MENA and Malaysia, the significant differences might occur. Malaysia nowadays is enjoying a 14th place in worldwide economic complexity index ranking.¹³⁷ UAE, as the best-ranked country inside of MENA, owns 31st position globally.¹³⁸ UAE with a couple of other countries located in the same region expressed their concerns to diversify their economies in order to become less dependent on the hydrocarbon resources, especially in the times of oil price downturns.¹³⁹ However, UAE is experiencing another phenomenon of real estate bubbles, enabling MENA countries to overcome Dutch disease and its negative consequences coming with itself.

Fluctuations of oil prices in the international market can not only destroy long term of national economic development planning, but fluctuation curve of oil prices can explain the drops or rise of economic complexity curve. (figure 3.2) Observing oil's price line in 2003, the market was experiencing stable oil prices rise. The oil incomes were benefiting economies of oil exporting countries, but on

¹³⁶ World Bank, "World Development Indicators – Labour Force Participation Rate, Female (% of women population)," *Databank*, Available at:

<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS&country=>

¹³⁷ The Atlas Media, "The Observatory of Economic Complexity 2016," (Retrieved: April 26, 2018), Available at: <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/>

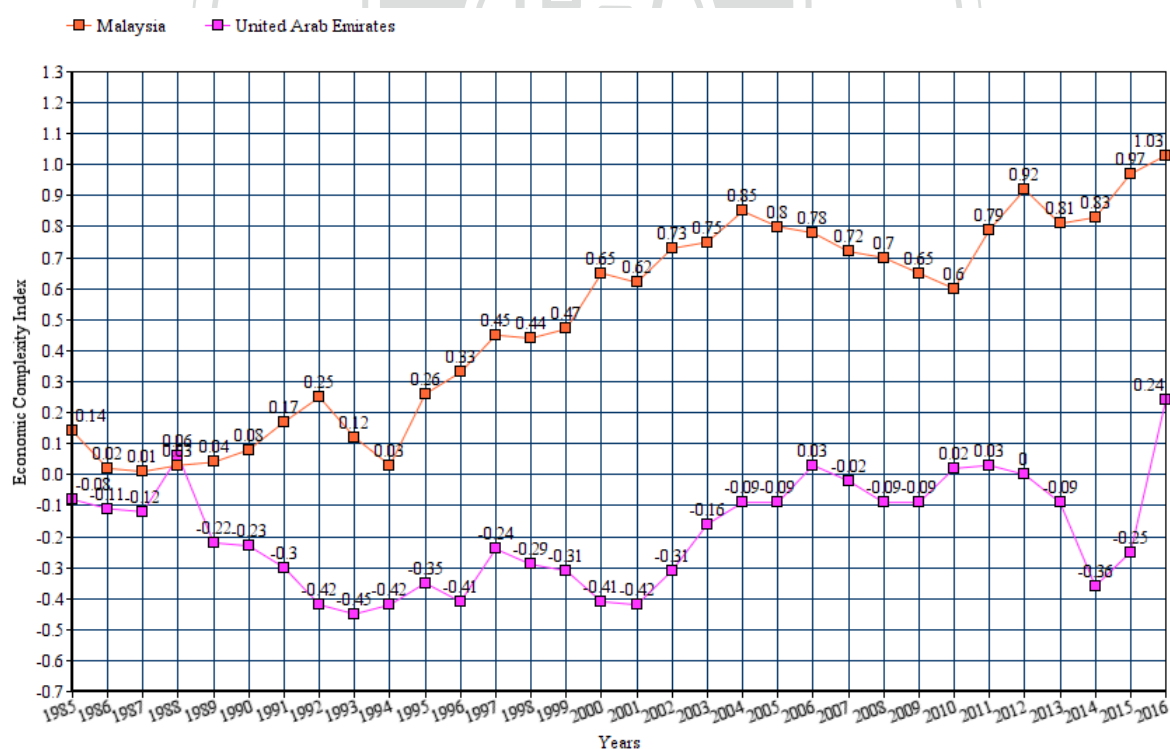
¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

the other hand deepening problem of Dutch disease, indirectly undermining female labour force participation and decreasing gender inequality index of petro states.

The reaction of high oil prices at international markets was pushing economic complexity in both Malaysia and MENA countries downwards between years of 2004 and 2010. (figure 3.2) After 6 years of rising oil prices, the oil market experienced a sudden and sharp drop in the prices. The reaction of Malaysian economic complexity index pointed out a higher rate of economic diversification, on the other hand, UAE's index stagnates, as a result of keeping its economy still infected by Dutch disease.

Figure 3.2 Comparison of economic complexity index developments of Malaysia and MENA



Source: Own graph based on data retrieved from: The Observatory of Economic Complexity – available at: https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/sitc/export/mys/all/show/1984/

In the case of UAE, graph is also pointing out reluctance of government to implement policies leading towards economic diversification. The initial point of economic complexity of UAE has a similar value than the ending point; fluctuation of the oil prices is negatively correlated with economic complexity index, explaining fluctuation of index. Booming of real estate sector did not help significantly to boost the curve up. On the other hand, economic complexity curve of Malaysia is signalling constant positive growth. Nowadays, Malaysian economy is considered as 14th best performing in terms of economic diversification.¹⁴⁰ However, in 1985 both of the countries had shared a initial value of diversification of their economies.¹⁴¹

3.3 Conclusion

Over last three decades, Malaysia experienced a transition from the natural resources dependent economy (men are playing a key role, providing main working force to labour market) to an economy based on manufacturing and services, emerging as the key industries, providing job opportunities for women. Rubber, tin, and petroleum products which accounted for more than 60% of Malaysian export in the year 1980, declined sharply in one decade to only 4.9%.¹⁴² Exploitation of countries' natural resources is mainly capital intensive, rather than labour intensive industry, preferring men employment, supporting assumptions of Dutch disease, having negative consequences for the future of the women.

In the mid-1980s, it seemed that Malaysia will be cursed by natural resources, luckily decision of Prime Minister Mahathir to diversify countries' economy moved Malaysia away

¹⁴⁰ The Atlas Media, "The Observatory of Economic Complexity 2016," (Retrieved: April 26, 2018), Available at: <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/>

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ma Qinfen, "Female Labour Force Participation in Malaysia: Time-series Evidence," *South East Asia Journal of Contemporary Business, Economics and Law*, Vol. 14, (Dec 3, 2017), Available at: <http://seajbel.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ECON-51.pdf>

from resource dependency. Economic diversification was able to mitigate the negative consequences of Dutch disease, saving Malaysia in front of the curse of natural resources. It allowed women to participate in the labour market, making them more independent and empowered, lowering the index of gender inequality.

Moreover, a positive correlation between economic complexity index and female labour force participation is causing the high difference between Malaysia and MENA's average rate of female employment, since Malaysian economy is diversified to the high extent compared to countries of MENA. This logic is supporting the workings of Dutch disease theory, causing negative consequences for women in MENA region, but the implementation of this logic into the case of Malaysia is not accurate. Malaysia managed successfully diversifies its economy and escape in front of Dutch disease, making the country relatively gender equal.

This chapter approved the validity of an initial hypothesis, that countries' either less dependent on oil resources or either country with the more diversified economy are able to diminish the negative consequences of Dutch disease, leading towards higher female labour force participation. Consequently, causing higher gender equality as graphs in this chapter proved. Additionally, higher oil prices on international markets can have negative consequences on gender inequality status, by causing a barrier for countries' initiation to diversify their economies, as the visible inside of MENA region.

Chapter 4 Islam and Women's Status in Malaysia

Historically, Muslim women have not been treated as equal as Muslim men.¹⁴³ As our history was mostly shaped by the domination of men; the patriarchal rulers and legal scholars imposed a system of inequality, justified by their interpretations of Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet.¹⁴⁴ The historical interpretations of Islam by various male scholars are having effect on Muslim societies nowadays; from the religion became a tradition, shaping a customs rather than truthful interpretations of Prophet Mohamed's teachings. Therefore, the experiences of Muslim women vary widely within different societies affected by not only geographical proximity, but also other factors of different teachings of Islam.

Consequently, their adherence and beliefs of Islam is a commonly shared factor, affecting lives of people to certain degree, giving them a common identity, serving as bridge in order to interconnect wide cultural, social, and economic differences between them. The role of this chapter will be to capture the different experiences of Muslim women within different societies influenced by different level of cultural pluralism, having influence on Islamist religiosity, consequently shaping gender inequality. Moreover, this chapter will examine the role of Islam, affecting gender inequality and analyzing cultural pluralism as influence to which level are Muslims liberal or conservative, indirectly affecting gender inequality index.

Simply looking at different Muslim countries, providing visible differences of levels of Islamic workings, and influencing socio-economic behaviour as literature review previously suggested. Based on participatory observations of author, who spent one semester

¹⁴³ Oxford Islamic Studies, "Women," *Oxford*, (retrieved: April 20, 2018), Available at: <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t243/e370>

¹⁴⁴ Asma Barlas, "'Believing Women' in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an," (University of Texas: 2016) p.52-54

studying at National University of Malaya, it is obvious that level of Islamic religiosity vary not only across Muslim majority countries, but Malaysia itself. Therefore, how different level of religious pluralism having effect on level of Islamic religiosity can be observed within Malaysia.

Existing literature review found out significant correlation between Islamic religiosity and status of women. This chapter is going to measure effect of religious pluralism on 'Islamicity', as having indirect impact on women's status. Thus, it is important for this part of thesis to elaborate on the different components of Islam and their level of significance in different regions. This process will help to explain variety of gender inequality across Muslim majority petro states in order to find a correlation in order to observe if the religious pluralism can serve as a mitigating variable to lessen negative effects of Islam on status of women in Muslim majority states.

In order to have more valid and reliable data, the author constructed the questionnaire to discover to what extent are Malaysians liberal or conservative Muslims. The questionnaire pays more attention to the selection of sample size and its variation across the Malaysia as our centre of the study. Questionnaire is capturing Malaysian Muslim respondents of various ages, educational backgrounds, social classes and economic statuses, coming from different regions in order to measure how liberal or conservative Muslims are in Malaysia, affecting women's status across majority Muslim countries, providing possible explanation why Malaysian women are better off within other Muslim majority petro states.

Consequently, this chapter will examine different components of Islam, influencing women's status in Malaysia. Examination of these variables can uncover possible counter mitigating forces, which differ from MENA countries, making Malaysian women more equal to Malaysian men compared to level of gender inequality inside of MENA region. However,

before turning to evaluation of Islamic religiosity, affecting status of women in Malaysian society, firstly this chapter is going to introduce Malaysia from perspective of being Muslim majority country.

4.1 Malaysia as a Muslim Majority Country – Population and Religion

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious federation of 13 states and three federal territories, mainly because during colonization, British were very keen on welcoming foreign workers from surrounding countries.¹⁴⁵ Malaysian population is nowadays in year of 2017 over seeding 31 million of people and it's consisted of the ethnic groups of Bumiputera¹⁴⁶ (67.4%), Chinese (24.6%), Indians (7.3%) and others (0.7%).¹⁴⁷ As this work is dealing with religiosity as the variable impacting status of women, it is important to note that 61.3% of people are affiliated to Islamic beliefs, and Buddhism come as second major religion with 19.8% of population affiliated toward this religion.¹⁴⁸

Due to strategic location of Malaysia, the Malay Peninsula has historically long tradition as being hub for international trade, having significant influence on its ethnic and religious composition.¹⁴⁹ British during their colonization of the Malay Peninsula changed ethnic and religious composition of Malaysia by inviting huge numbers of Indians and Chinese people as guest workers. Malays, Chinese and Indians lived relatively peaceful,

¹⁴⁵ BBC, "Malaysia country profile," *BBC*, (20 July 2017), Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15356257>

¹⁴⁶ Malaysian term to describe Malays and other indigenous people. The term can be literally translated as "son of the land" or "son of the soil." This group is consisted from big majority of Muslim believers.

¹⁴⁷ Departments of Statistics Malaysia, "Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristic Report," (29, July 2011), Available at:

https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemeByCat&cat=117&bul_id=MDMxdHZjWtk1SjFzTzNkRXYzcVZjd09&menu_id=L0pheU43NWJwRWVSZklWdzQ4TlhUUT09

¹⁴⁸ Departments of Statistics Malaysia, "Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristic Report,"

¹⁴⁹ BBC, "Malaysia country profile," *BBC*

although the three main racial groups lived in separate communities.¹⁵⁰ The Malays lived mostly in the villages, the Chinese in the urban areas, and the Indians in the towns and plantation.¹⁵¹ In late 1970s, the structural economic change starting take a place as previous chapter pointed out, bringing into the cities.¹⁵² The proportions of Muslim Malays have been increasing significantly, due to lower birth-rate of Chinese and its emigration as a result of institutionalized discrimination against them.¹⁵³

Distribution of population across Malaysia based on ethnicity and religious beliefs can play significant role in measuring to what extent are people liberal or conservative Muslims. Therefore, it would be important to gather responds from participants coming from not only different backgrounds, but also from various parts of Malaysia in order to capture effects of various degrees of cultural diversity, more importantly for our research examining different ratio of Muslim and non-Muslim population living at the certain place. In Peninsular Malaysia, affiliation to Muslim population prevails in Eastern parts of the peninsula and in Borneo; states of Sabah and Sarawak are disposing with places consisting from only Malays.

The data of distribution of Malaysian ethnicities, providing the construction of Malaysian ethnicities disperse across Malaysia, allowing us to overview the different structure of people with different religious beliefs, living at the same place, consequently providing the picture of multiculturalism and religious pluralism in Malaysia. The presence of different religious and ethnic groups among Malaysia is making people more aware of each other. Although, the forces of religious pluralism as one of the variables mitigating negative

¹⁵⁰ Michael Bristow, "Ethnic harmony on show in Malaysian street," *BBC News, Malacca*, (10 May 2016), Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36125534>

¹⁵¹ Citation needed

¹⁵² Michael Bristow, "Ethnic harmony on show in Malaysian street," *BBC News*

¹⁵³ Helen Ang, "Honey, I shrunk the Chinese," (December 9, 2009), Available at : https://web.archive.org/web/20120525132129/http://english.cpiasia.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1804:honey-i-shrunk-the-chinese-&catid=198:helen-ang&Itemid=156

consequences of religion on the women's status will be examine into further depth in the following sections of this chapter.

Based on the hypothesis, states across Malaysia possessing with higher degree of cultural diversity are composed out of more liberal Muslim societies, having more liberal vision of Islamist components which are negatively influencing gender inequality. On the other hand, states across Malaysia, which are lacking higher degree of religious pluralism,¹⁵⁴ would have a more conservative perspective on roles of women shaped by religious beliefs. Significantly positive correlation of Islamic religion and women's status was displayed at literature review; therefore, this chapter will find how different levels of religious diversity impacting how liberal Muslims are at certain areas across Malaysia.

4.1.1 Malaysian Government

Malaysia is a federal constitutional elective monarchy; its system of government is closely modelled on that of the Westminster parliamentary system, as a legacy of British colonial rule.¹⁵⁵ The secular government paying respect on traditional beliefs of every ethnic group living in Malaysia; although, the official religion is Islam. The forces of religion are affecting decision of particular ministries inside of government, as Ministry of religion and family owns high position within the government; it has a power to over view all the policies coming into the force. This ministry is still enforcing significant power of religion by having power over other ministries to apply laws parallel with Islamic beliefs.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ In our case lower percentage of non-Muslim living together with Muslims in the certain states of Malaysia

¹⁵⁵ International Business Publications, "Malaysia Recent Economic and Political Developments Yearbook Volume I," (Washington D.C., 2015), p.45

¹⁵⁶ Helaine Selin, "Parenting Across Cultures – Childrearing, Motherhood and Fatherhood in Non Western Countries," (Springer: New York, 2013), p.84-87

The variety of government's involvement into religion in Malaysia and MENA region is very extensive, from mandating an official national religion, to subsidizing religious activities, to discouraging religious practices; this dimension placing religious institutionalism as important part of policy making, shaping religious activities by either encouraging or discouraging them, and thereby indirectly affecting status of women in society.¹⁵⁷ Malaysian's religious department under ministry of family is still powerful, deducted from previous paragraph.

On the other side to stay objective in the role of government, there are existing programs on women budgeting, having positive effect on applying policies, which are beneficiary for women's empowerment into Malaysian society. *"Therefore the Malaysian government has sent mixed signals about the role of women in the public and private spheres. While encouraging women's participation in higher education and the paid labor force, the government continues to endorse conservative gender norms that are typically based on religious ideology in both official and unofficial discourse."*¹⁵⁸ Consequently, government is important motor for progress of women's emancipation in Malaysia, but on the other hand, its own structures might be still influenced by conservative religious structures, putting religion as over viewing unit, being sometimes barrier for women's emancipation in Malaysia.

4.2 Cultural Pluralism and Women's Status in Malaysia

Multiculturalism is ambiguous term, meaning that cultural and religious pluralism in a particular society where the various ethnic groups living together, having sufficient collaboration and dialog between them without having to sacrifice their particular and unique

¹⁵⁷ Erica Miller, "The Role of Islam in Malaysian Political Practice," *Al Nakhlah*, (Fall, 2004), Available at: <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/~media/Fletcher/Microsites/al%20Nakhlah/archives/pdfs/miller.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ Helaine Selin, "Parenting Across Cultures – Childrearing, Motherhood and Fatherhood in Non Western Countries"

identities.¹⁵⁹ In order to maintain this phenomenon of cultural and religious diversity of three completely different ethnic groups living in common society in Malaysia, policies for people of various ethnic and religious groups are addressed by the authorities as defined by the group to which they belong, so sometimes law must have a various measures based on different ethnicity.¹⁶⁰

Measuring multiculturalism and its effect on the society is very problematic. Stirling index and the Inverse Herfindahl Fractionalization index are dealing with this troublesome way to obtain some numeric results in order to measure level of multiculturalism. However, some experts consider these methods to be insufficient in one way or another, focusing too narrowly on certain types of diversity, or restricting the measurement to only one variable at a time.¹⁶¹

The lack of sufficient way to obtain different levels of religious diversity across Malaysia would be impossible. Based on demographic dataset, the author can examined different level of cultural and religious diversity by looking at ratio of Muslim and non-Muslims living together at the same state in Malaysia. In order to find out to which level are respondents liberal or conservative Muslims, the author constructed questionnaire out of components of Islam which are directly influencing women's status or components possessing with gender discriminatory particles as it is going to be described in next section of this chapter.

¹⁵⁹ Abdul Rahman Embong, "*Malaysia as a Multicultural Society*," (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2012), p.51

¹⁶⁰ Kenan Malik, "Multiculturalism undermines diversity," *The Guardian*, (March 17, 2017), Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/mar/17/multiculturalism-diversity-political-policy>
British Dictionary, "Multiculturalism," *Dictionary*, Available at: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/multiculturalism>

¹⁶¹ Cultural Infusion, "We Can Now Measure Cultural Diversity?," (Retrieved: April 2, 2018), Available at: <https://culturalinfusion.org.au/can-now-measure-cultural-diversity/>

4.2.1 'Islamicity': How Liberal or Conservative are Muslims in Malaysia

Malaysia possesses with diverse, multicultural build up of the population; allowing us to examine the role of religious diversity as a counter variable, diminishing negative consequences of conservative Islamist religiosity as observable inside of MENA region as negatively impacting status of women in the society. To measure religious diversity, this chapter will use data accessed from statistical department of Malaysia, providing the percentile ratio between different ethnicities and religious groups living in different parts of Malaysia, making possible to compare the different levels of religious diversity, expressing in percentage of non-Muslims to Muslims population.

On the other hand, measuring to which extent are Malaysian Muslims liberal or conservative within different Malaysian territories, it is difficult task to do. Based on similar study mentioned and explained in greater depth in literature review, conducted inside of MENA countries, together with knowledge of measuring Islamist religiosity, author constructed simple questionnaire to collect data from different territories disperse around Malaysia. Malay Muslim Malaysians were only respondents in order to have a suitable dataset, allowing us to compare the results gathered from Malaysia and also from MENA, observing direct effect of religion on gender inequality.

Questionnaire is constructed out of questions, helping to reveal the common religious beliefs, affecting position of women and consequently gender equality/inequality in Malaysian society, providing the possible answers to what extent is religion impacting gender inequality in Malaysia. The author is aware of potential challenges encountered by measuring how liberal Malaysian Muslims are in different parts of Malaysia, or as offending participants or provoking their sensitivity by the content, possibly biasing the results. In order to reduce

bias of the results is to assure privacy and anonymity of respondents while distributing of the questionnaires. The appropriateness of questions to not provoke respondents was discussed with Muslim professors teaching at University of Malaya and members of NGO – Sisters in Islam. The author also obtained valuable points while constructing the questionnaire.

The important factor of interpretation and analyzes questionnaire's results would be to observe the variation of answers by respondents coming from areas with different level of religious diversity. If the results gathered out of respondents coming from less culturally diverse states are relatively conservative, leading into stereotypical vision of low status of women caused by Islamist religiosity, then we can confirm the validity of our hypothesis.

Therefore, the most important task is to find, if there is a correlation between religious pluralism (percentile of non-Muslim to Muslim inhabitants) and Islamic religiosity (how liberal are Muslims), the results will be compared within Malaysia to find an impact of multiculturalism on the level of 'Islamicity'. The hypothesis suggests that regions with higher religious diversity tend to have more liberal Muslim majority population. By proving this hypothesis, cultural pluralism can be approved as valuable counter variable mitigating negative forces of Islam, making Malaysian women enjoying higher gender equality compared to women living in one of MENA countries.

Figure 4.1 (First Page) Analyzing Questionnaires: Components of Islamic Beliefs and Traditional Views Influencing Women's Status

Capturing different components of Islam having negative impact on women's status: How liberal Muslim are you?

What impact has Islamist religiosity and traditions on women's status in Malaysian Society?

Cultural diversity: Place of origins and current stay

Gender:	MALE	FEMALE	Age:	_____
Highest education level reached:	_____	Major:	_____	_____
Place of birth:	_____	Current city of your stay:	_____	_____
Occupation:	_____	Religion:	Muslim	Other: _____

Muslim women: Female respondents: measuring how liberal they are

Are you always wearing HIJAB in the public places? YES NO _____

Does your partner/boyfriend/parent allow you to walk on the street after dark by yourself?
YES NO Who? PARTNER BOYFRIEND PARENT ALL

Do you plan to work in the future? YES NO Even if yours household would be rich by providing enough resources coming from husband? YES NO Why? _____

If you and your husband are both working, who would stay with new born baby at home?
ME HUSBAND Why? _____

If you want to work, do you need to seek approval from your husband? YES NO

Do you know any Malay family in which male is staying at home with baby? YES NO

Muslim men: Male respondents

Would you support your wife/partner to work or rather prefer her to stay at home?
WORK HOME Why? _____

If you and your husband are both working, who would stay with new born baby at home?
ME WIFE Why? _____

Would you be willing to stay at home with baby, while your wife will continue to work?
YES NO

Do you believe position of women should be inside of household? YES NO

Do you want your partner to work? YES NO Why? _____

How it would be perceived by your surroundings if your partner does not have a job?
POSITIVE NEGATIVE NEUTRAL

Both genders: Common questions for both genders

Are you drinking alcohol regularly? YES NO Do people around you know that you drink alcohol? YES NO Who knows about it? PARENTS FRIENDS BOTH

The upper part of questionnaire is collecting basic data of finding the current level of stay and where participants are coming from in order to find out the level of cultural and religious diversity. Based on the state, the respondent comes from, the author can according demographic data; see the percentage of non-Muslim population, the responded is surrounded by. The second part is focused on female Muslim respondents to capture their views on various Islamic beliefs, causing gender inequality. The third part contains the same components, but looking at the male respondents only. Fourth part requires answers from both genders, including self assessment test, where would Muslim participants grade themselves on scale from 1 to 6, according their own belief, (1 as a most liberal Muslim and 6 as most conservative one) to see how liberal they think they are. The last part of questionnaire contains two questions if Islamist religion has impact on gender inequality in Malaysia to observe general thoughts inside of the Muslim society.

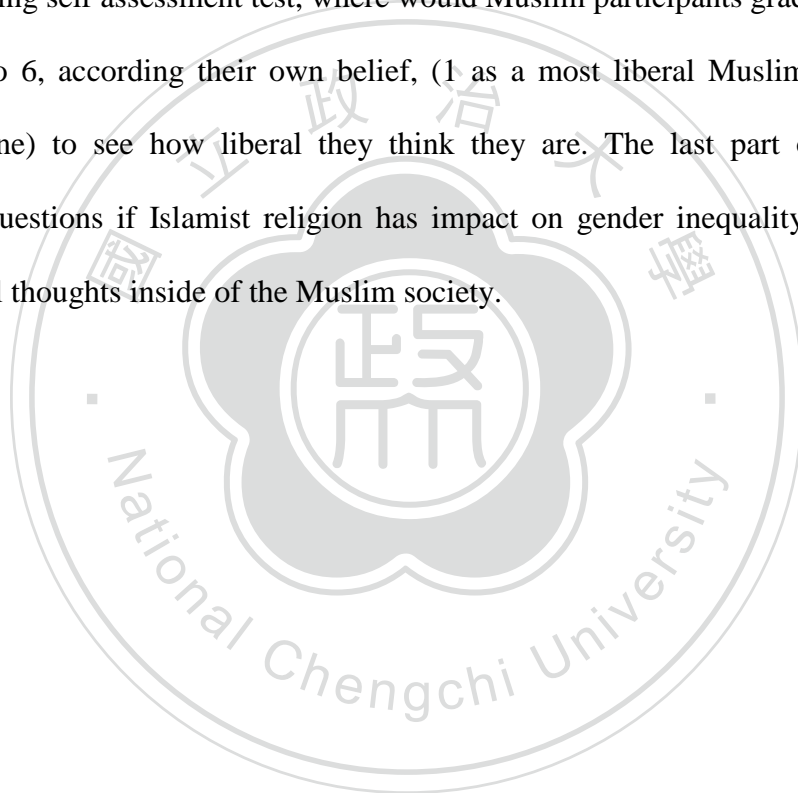


Figure 4.2 (Second Page) Analyzing Questionnaires: Components of Islamic Beliefs and Traditional Views Influencing Women's Status

Do you eat pork regularly? ~~NO~~ YES Do people around you know about it?
 Who? PARENTS FRIENDS BOTH

Could you imagine yourself to be in Polygamous partnership? ~~YES~~ NO Why? liberal: -1 pont

Can you imagine to date or marry a non-Muslim? YES NO Why? _____

Can you imagine that you or your children would date person with not affiliation to Islam?
 YES NO Why? _____

Do you believe that men should be main provider into common family household? YES NO

After marriage would you be willing to share a household works with your partner? YES NO
 What kind of work? ~~COOKING LAUNDRY DISHES CLEANING GARDENING KIDS~~

Do you think that in Malay family, it would be possible that men would stay home during
 maternity leave? YES NO Why? _____

On the scale from 1 to 6 would you perceive yourself as liberal or conservative Muslim
 (1 = most liberal, 6 = conservative) 1 2 3 4 5 6

What is your opinion towards the situations below? Please give your answer using the 5-point
 scale (1= Not important at all; 2= Not important; 3= Not sure; 4= Very important; 5= The
 most important)

	not important	the most important			
a) Accurate men covered clothing	1	2	3	4	5
b) Accurate women covered clothing	1	2	3	4	5
e) Women using perfume	1	2	3	4	5
f) Man's right to marry more than once	1	2	3	4	5
g) Man having more than one wife	1	2	3	4	5
h) Separation of genders in Mosques	1	2	3	4	5
i) Increasing number of LGBT	1	2	3	4	5

Do you think religion has impact on gender inequality in Malaysia? NO YES (if yes, how?)

What do you think is the reason of low women's status in majority Muslim countries in
 Middle East and North Africa? _____

Red square above provides self assessment of how liberal or conservative respondent is.

The evaluation of the responds is conducted by author, who is measuring the level of how liberal or conservative Muslims respondents are, based on their answers of individual questions. Depending how they answer the particular question, respondents are given or taken point of how liberal they are as we can see at figure 4.2. On the end there are 12 points of being most liberal or 0 as being most conservative Muslim. As our measurement scale only includes scale 1 to 6 therefore we need convert both scales together.

Converting table												Questionnaire's scale
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1	2	3	4	5	6							Level of <u>Islamicity</u>

The questionnaire provides percentage of non-Muslim as religious diversity and level of how liberal Muslims lives surrounded by non-Muslims, therefore we can run simple linear regression out of 56 observations in order to find if both variables are correlated or not to prove or disprove the hypothesis that with rising religious diversity, the Muslims are more liberal influencing their 'Islamicity'.

In order to get better understanding of how components of Islamist beliefs and traditions shaping ideas towards women, author used same structure as questionnaire to lead semi-structured interviews with respondents in order to get further understanding probe respondents for additional details why do they think so. In order to not be biased, the author conducted interviews with Malaysian Muslims and also interviews conducted with non-Muslim Malaysian respondents in order to get various angles of view. The author asked the same questions as indicated in questionnaire to non-Muslims what do they think about the issues, regarding Islamist religiosity affecting status of women in Malaysian society.

The location of data collection of questionnaire is very important in order to stimulate different variables affecting responds of people. In order to obtain different level of religious diversity (ration between Muslims and non-Muslims living at the certain place in Malaysia), the method of distribution of questionnaires in different location was very important. However, the author did not control different level of education and age of the sample, causing outliers to occur. Different location will ensure various results; the author assumes that less percentile of non-Muslim population living in same state will lead to higher levels of religiously conservative people. Therefore, it is important to ensure uniqueness of location satisfying different level of religious pluralism in order to find a correlation between these two variables.

Muslim conservatives can be also observed on election's poll results, as many politicians are trying to attract their voters by using Islam as tool for gravitating voters. Based on preferences we can find out regions with higher concentration of conservative Muslims and examine effect of religious pluralism. Collecting data was ensured by an author during travelling to different regions of Malaysia, but it was mainly done throughout the help of local friends, living or having families outside of Kuala Lumpur in order to assure variance of ration of cultural diversity. Questionnaire was also translated into local Bahasa Malay language in order to increase objectivity and validity of research by targeting many different groups.

The main limitation of the results of the questionnaire is distribution of the questionnaires, since it is difficult to approach conservative Muslims in the public areas. The only way to distribute questionnaires was throughout local friends living in these areas, where cultural diversity is almost not existing, meaning the absence of non-Muslim in certain areas of the country. Malaysia has two states which are considered as very conservative Muslim states, having only small amount of non-Muslims living in these areas. Kelantan and

Terengganu are states, where public opinion of majority is to implement Sharia (Islamic) law into the force. Based on these facts, it is possible to predict the opinions of the population on the components of Islam influencing gender inequality in Muslim communities across Malaysia.

4.2.2 Components of Islamic beliefs and traditions causing gender inequality in Malaysia – evaluation of data collected from questionnaires

The questionnaire is build up out of the different components of Islam which are not only discriminating women inside of Islamist society, but also components which are going to allow us to measure different value of 'Islamicity' in order to compare different values together. This section will introduce particular components of Islam and particular beliefs connected to Islam in order to make a comparison not only towards MENA states, but to compare different levels of religious 'Islamicity' within different parts of Malaysia. This will help us to proof or disprove, if there is any connection existing between Islam's religiosity (how liberal or how conservative Muslims living at particular areas of Malaysia) and different variance of cultural pluralism (the percentage of non-Muslim population living at certain areas of Malaysia).

4.2.2.1 Position of Women in Society Structured by Islamic Beliefs

The Quran gives the man the right of 'guardianship' or 'superiority' over the family structure in order to prevent dissension and friction between the spouses; as the prominent members of Egyptian Muslim Brother believe that religion is shaping role of women in the

society.¹⁶² This concept of guardianship might be the forming bloc for different gender roles in different Muslim societies. Initially, Islamic beliefs or at least translation of what some prominent patriarchal Imams spreading: role of women often viewed as obedient wives and children care takers, staying within the households and on the other side expectations of men lies by protecting of the family and bringing financial resources.¹⁶³ However, on the other note, significant group of Muslim scholars do not agree that women are obligated to serve their husbands or do housework or do any kind of work at home.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, the experience of Muslim women and their roles in the society widely vary across different countries affiliated to Islamist beliefs, even on the fact that Quran indicates men and women spiritually equal.¹⁶⁵

Traditional interpretations of Islam, require a woman to have her husband's permission to leave the house and take up employment, due to her protection, but at the same time limits women's emancipation in Muslim society.¹⁶⁶ Based on the research, conducted in MENA countries, catching the perception of local Muslim men on women in household, observing high percentage of men seeing position of women rather in household than in workforce. For the respondents of a research, it was a shame to let women to participate in labour market. Therefore, the questioner constructed by an author is aiming to capture similarities or differences within men and women respondents on perception of women working in Malaysian society, having a direct impact on women status in the society.

¹⁶² Revolvly, "Gender Roles in Islam," *Revolvly*, (retrieved: April 28, 2018), Available at: <https://www.revolvly.com/main/index.php?s=Gender+roles+in+Islam>

¹⁶³ Safra project, "Sexuality, Gender and Islam," (Updated : 2013), Available at: <http://www.safraproject.org/sgi-genderroles.htm>

¹⁶⁴ Al-Sayyid Ali Al-Husseini Al-Sassini, "Women's issues," (retrieved: April 28, 2018), Available at: <https://www.sistani.org/english/book/46/2065/>

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Towards Gender Equality: Muslim Family Laws and the Shari'ah, Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family," (Musawah, Kuala Lumpur: 2009), p.31-33

In order to have a chance to see a comparison of different levels of Islamist religiosity settled inside of different cultures and traditions, seeing the variation between different region and country. In MENA region, where the religious traditions are deeply rooted inside of their societies; these countries ranks as the lowest in the indicators of economic participation, employment opportunity and the political empowerment of women.¹⁶⁷ Ten countries with the lowest women labour force participation in the world – Jordan, Oman, Morocco, Iran, Turkey, Algeria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Syria – are Islamic countries, as are the four countries that have no female parliamentarians.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, the questionnaire conducted in Malaysia would ask the same questions as one conducted across MENA region in order to provide necessary data for author to compare results gathered in Malaysia and MENA. Allowing to distinguish different levels of women's discrimination across different majority Muslim countries.

4.2.2.2 Position of Women Inside of Household

Since discriminatory stereotypes still preserved in households, questionnaire is also measuring the strength of traditional views on the role of the women, either influenced by religion or by culture and traditions in the Malaysian society. These views can uncover potential answers to which extent is Malaysian society gender equal or unequal, as questionnaire is identifying the specific roles and separation of works inside of Malaysian households. The role of culture and deeply rooted traditions, which are the most of the times intertwined by patriarchal interpretation of religion, making the change difficult and time

¹⁶⁷ Ricardo Hausmann; Laura D. Tyson; Saadia Zahidi, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2012," *World Economic Forum*, (Switzerland: 2013), Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2012.pdf

¹⁶⁸ Ricardo Hausmann; Laura D. Tyson; Saadia Zahidi, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2012"

consuming not only shaping roles of the women outside of the household, but in Malaysia it is mainly inside of their homes.¹⁶⁹

In the most of the MENA countries, assuming from the results of previous researches, the position of women is viewed as being in the centre of the household, regardless level of education possessed by wife. This prejudice of role of females is deeply, socially constructed into Muslim society, making it huge obstacle for women empowerment inside of majority Muslim countries.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, the questionnaire is also aiming to clarify the different roles of women and men inside of Malaysian household, based on deep rooted traditions and customs of Islamic communities, shaping positions of women at home.

In order to find out to what extent these forces are influencing particular gender roles inside of household, therefore questionnaire is asking respondents to identify their view on traditional duties after marriage. Data gathered from Malaysia will serve also for comparative purposes to compare the different beliefs of gender roles in Malaysian and Middle Eastern and North African space, since data from research in MENA region pointed out that women's place is in the kitchen.¹⁷¹

4.2.2.3 Position of Women Outside of the Household

Women are allowed to work in Islam; subject to certain conditions, such as, if a woman is in financial need and her employment does not cause her to neglect her important role as a mother and wife.¹⁷² "Saudi Arabia has strict laws requiring women to seek male

¹⁶⁹ Musawah, "CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws," (Vilin Press: Selangor – 2012) p.14

¹⁷⁰ Dr. Googelberg, "Islam – Women and Islam," p.129

¹⁷¹ Pomodos research in MENA

¹⁷² Dr. Googelberg, "Islam – Women and Islam," p.206

permission for various decisions and actions.”¹⁷³ However, this perception of women discriminates women to seek employment in front of the men, judging on the results of the previously mentioned research in this thesis; women are still highly expected to participate in family matters, rather than seek opportunities outside of their households, causing prioritization of men, mainly in private sectors. Based on the assumption that woman's sphere of responsibility is in the household, where she is the dominant figure – and a man's corresponding sphere is outside; men are seen as main provider of financial resources into common budget.

Therefore, the questionnaire is aiming to figure out the socially constructed position of women under religious beliefs in Malaysia. The aim is to capture various degree of cultural pluralism across Malaysia, consequently comparing the results within Malaysia and also countries of MENA. The results allow us also to penetrate into problematic of various perceptions by different genders, pointing to what extent Muslim religious traditions are affecting perception of men on position of women in the Malaysian society. The author suggests that more liberal way of practising Islamic religion provides more space for government to support gender budgeting in order to support women's education and their labour participation, subsequently changing conservative patriarchal views on the role of the women.

In Saudi Arabia, not long time ago, it was illegal for Saudi's women to drive a car. Suddenly, right after women gained right to drive a vehicle in Saudi Arabia, the strong opposition, coming mainly from conservative part of population expressed negative feelings about letting women to obtain driving licenses. According to conservative interpretations of

¹⁷³ BBC, “*Saudi Arabia detains seven activists ahead of lifting of driving ban*,” BBC News, (May 18, 2018)

Islam, women's position is at home, so she does not need to have any means of transportation.¹⁷⁴

Prince Mohammed bin Salman, spreading his vision of diversification of economy away from natural resources, by allowing women to start their own businesses without asking permission from a man as a vision of 2030 programme. As previous chapter pointed out the sceptical views of doing so, especially when it comes to empowerment of the women. Conservative population of Saudi Arabia signalled unwillingness of government to contradict Allah's wills by implementing too liberal policies, breaking faith of more liberal, emancipated women getting more equal position towards the men.

On the other hand, there is nothing rare to see women riding a car in Malaysia, in order to reach their destination of schools, jobs, or place of interests to do shopping or meet their friends outside of their homes. During my stay in Kuala Lumpur, my female Muslim friend gave me a ride back home without any hesitation; pointing on the different levels of religious beliefs between various Muslim's regions.

Not only Saudi Arabia's women are suffering from high gender inequality indexes, but women in Iran or Afghanistan are suffering from high illiteracy rates, making very difficult for them to seek employment outside of homes. The author will try to prove that high illiteracy and women's unemployment rates are highly associated with deeply rooted traditions intertwined by Islamist religious beliefs. Furthermore, the questionnaire is constructed to capture the level of Islamist religiosity in order to compare it with other majority Muslim countries by different beliefs and social construction, changing the views of the role of women in different societies.

¹⁷⁴ BBC, "Saudi Arabia detains seven activists ahead of lifting of driving ban," BBC News, (May 18, 2018)

4.2.2.4 Interfaith Marriage, Eating Pork and Drinking Alcohol as Tools for Measuring Islamist Religiosity

According to a broad consensus, religiously sterile, a Muslim woman is formally forbidden to marry a non-Muslim man regardless of his religion, while a Muslim man is allowed to get married to a non-Muslim woman, mainly a Christian or a Jew, considered by the Islamic schools as “People of the Book.”¹⁷⁵ This is one of the examples that Islam internally incorporates gender inequality between men and women, as Allah gave more privileges into hands of the men rather than women.

Therefore, the respondents of the questionnaire in Malaysia would be asked to give their opinions, gathering their perceptions regarding marriage, to which extent they are keen to date or marry non-Muslim men or women; and to what extent is acceptable to date or even marry non-Muslim believer from the perspectives of both genders. These particular questions are serving to measure the Islamist religiosity (how liberal or how conservative Muslims are) in Malaysia. The results of the respondents would be compared with in different parts of Malaysia, to observe role of cultural pluralism as vital mitigating variable of negative consequences of Islamist religiosity, as was identified in introduction of this chapter.

The another globally very well known component of Islam is prohibition of drinking alcohol and eating pork for Muslim believers, but even in conservative countries there are findable underground places where is a possibility to purchase both, pork and alcohol. The author personally knows Muslims, which are drinking alcohol and eating pork. On the other

¹⁷⁵ People of the Book:

People belonging to a religion in which a Book was revealed as the Torah or Bible. Muslims are compelled to believe in these books since they were revealed by the same Creator. The Qur'an, the last revelation, is the follow-up of the same universal spiritual message addressed by God to all humans by means of His successive prophets.

Asma Lamrabet, “What does the Qur'an say about the interfaith marriage?,” (Jan 18, 2013), Available at: <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.asma-lamrabet.com/articles/what-does-the-qur-an-say-about-the-interfaith-marriage/>

hand, the author encountered situation when Muslim felt uncomfortable while other Muslims and non-Muslims friends were drinking together. Based on alcohol as it is directly related to Islamic practice, it is possible to measure Islamic religiosity, judging on alcohol consumption per country.¹⁷⁶

In the case of eating pork and consuming alcohol, the aim of the questionnaire is again to measure to what extent is a person liberal or not a liberal Muslim believer. Muslims which consume both, they are most of the time considered as liberal in terms of their religious beliefs. The last part of the questionnaire is also constructed in order to measure Islamist religiosity of respondents, paying respect on the differences between genders in Malaysian society. The results will allow us to measure to which extent are Islamist beliefs impacting women's status in the society, taking into assumptions that more conservative Muslim societies have discriminative tendencies towards women.

4.2.2.5 Polygamous partnership

In Islamic marital jurisprudence, Muslim man can marry more than one wife unless they all will be treated on equal bases; on the other hand Muslim women is not allowed to marry more than one husband at once, regardless her socio-economic status.¹⁷⁷ In some progressive secular majority Muslim countries, the practice of polygamy is prohibited by law; however, there are still many countries including Malaysia, allowing this act, even on the fact that Malaysian society is governed by secularism. From not conservative Muslim perspective, polygamous marriage is perceived as discriminatory factor towards women in Islam,

¹⁷⁶ Abdel-Jaouad Ouarraki, "How to Measure Islam," (Leiden University: May 19, 2017) p.34 Available at: https://msanl.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Capstone_Ouarraki_Final.pdf

¹⁷⁷ Islamswomen, "Marriage," (retrieved: May 25, 2018), Available at: http://www.islamswomen.com/marriage/intro_to_marriage.php

countermining a women's right to equality with men.¹⁷⁸ Based on this fact, the opinion on the issue of polygamy can point out to which extent are respondents liberal or conservative Islam believers.

Due to the fact that polygamous marriage is not prohibited under secular Malaysian law, the questionnaire will gather opinions of men and women on this topic, finding the disparities within respondents of both genders. The acceptance disapproval of Malaysian society on the topic of polygamy can point to which extent are Malaysian Muslims affected by Islamist beliefs, enabling us to measure the Islamist religiosity directly influencing position of women within Malay's society.

4.2.3 The Results of Impact of Multiculturalism on Islamist Religiosity in Malaysia

*“High income of other household member, raises the reservation wage of mothers, thus lowers the probability of participation when the objective of working is to help family's financial need. The impact of childcare on mothers' labour force participation is significant but not as the theory predicted. The probability of participation in labour force is significantly higher for women who lived in the urban areas where jobs opportunities are greater compared to the rural.”*¹⁷⁹ The male and female respondents are approving these assumptions; responds of both genders would prefer their wife to work in order to increase the aggregate income of the family. Taking the same assumptions of mindset into MENA

¹⁷⁸ Musawah, “CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws,” (Vilin Press: Selangor – 2012) p.8

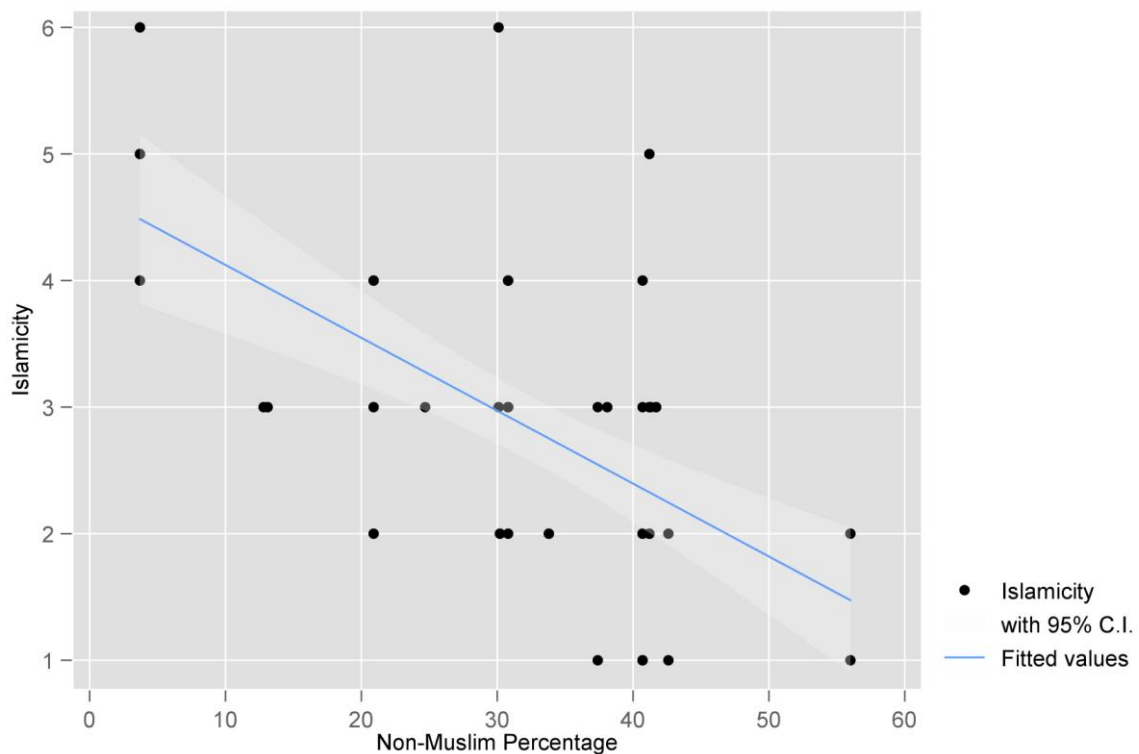
¹⁷⁹ Nor'Aznin Abu Bakar and Norehan Abdullah, “Labor Force Participation of Women in Malaysia,” (Universiti Utara Malaysia: December, 2007) Available at: http://repo.uum.edu.my/2469/1/Nor%E2%80%99Aznin_Abu_Bakar.pdf

countries, women rather tend to be with kids at home than work, economically supported by government financial transfers, keeping women's status low.

However, the most of female respondents in Malaysia pointed out the willingness to work in order to satisfy their needs. Male respondents coming from rather more multi religious areas of Malaysia tended to support women to work in order to increase economic budget of the family. Furthermore, the male and female respondents, regarding the influence of other variables, having high tendency to prefer women to take care of newborn children and many household activities connected to it. Although, this practice can be influenced not only by Islamic religion, but culture and traditions have to be taken into account as well. The mixture of all the attributes is pushing women into the centre of the household.

The interesting finding is, that approximately same percentile of male and female respondents (60%) believe that position of women is inside of household, taking care of baby and household as whole, and that men should be main economic provider into common family's household. Those respondents are coming from parts of Malaysia less influenced by multiculturalism; however, some more liberal Muslims also seen women rather inside of home than outside. People coming from very diverse and multicultural parts of Malaysia, are relatively more open minded by answering the questionnaire. They have a tendency to perceive Islamic religion as the secondary force, influencing their behaviour inside and outside of their homes.

Figure 4.4 Correlation of Islamic religiosity with Percentage of non- Muslims in Malaysia



Source: Own Graph Based on Data Collected from Questionnaire, and Departments of Statistics Malaysia, “Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristic Report”

The Graph visually points out a high negative correlation between the percentage of a non-Muslim and various levels of 'Isamicity,' observable are outliers which do not fit into a hypothesis. Moreover, outliers are the results of different age and education in our sample. The questionnaire did not control only one age group or education group; therefore outliers, are observable in the graph above. As author observed during his stay in Malaysia, many young people are open-minded and liberal Muslims, even on the fact that their parents are very conservative. The age of the respondents can predict to which extent liberal or conservative Muslims they are, causing the significant gap between young liberal Muslims and older conservative generations of Malaysian Muslims.

Table 4.2 The effect of cultural pluralism (% of non-muslims) on Islamicity

	Islamicity
% of non-muslims	0.05758*** (0.0108).
Constant	4.6994*** (0.0702).
Observations	56
R-Squared	0
F-Test	28.59***
Note: *p<0.1*,p0.05,***p<0.01 Standar Error in parenthesis	

Source: Statistics Based on Stata, Data Collected from Questionnaire, and Departments of Statistics Malaysia, “Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristic Report”

Moreover, the value of Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables is a negative value. (-0.058) It demonstrates that variables are negatively correlated. The increase of one percent of non-Muslim’s population living in particular state in Malaysia, pushing Muslim population become more liberal by decreasing of 0.058 of Islamicity. Therefore, the approximate increase of each additional 20 percent of non-Muslim living in particular area of Malaysia can decrease Muslim conservatives by 1 point of Islamicity, making them more liberal, consequently increasing the status of women. The bivariate regression also shows significance by using one to predict the other, therefore higher Islamicity can predict the percentage of non-Muslim living in a particular area of Malaysia. R square root suggests that model fits. Both variables are correlated at 99% of confidence level, suggesting the significant impact of cultural diversity on the level to which extent are Muslims liberal or conservative in terms of religion.

In comparison to MENA, Malaysia posses with a multicultural society, making Muslims less conservative. The forces of religious pluralism can interact within each other, changing the old conservative perspectives on roles of women as the results of the

questionnaire provided, making Malaysian women more equal compared to women living in one of MENA countries.

4.2.4 Political Preferences as Determinant of 'Islamicity' in Malaysia.

A connection between religion and politics is an integral part of every state, having bilateral relations, influencing each other. In Malaysia's most conservative Islamic state of Kelantan, where (less than 4% of non-Muslims are living), Islamic party pushing for implementation of Sharia (Islamic law) is ruling for 28 years.¹⁸⁰ They have been democratically elected for 7 consecutive terms, pointing to the fact that people in Kelantan are conservative Islamist, preferring Islamic rule of their state rather than secularism. On May 9th, 2018, a general election took a place to national parliament in Malaysia, Islamist Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS), which has a stronghold in Kelantan, holds only two seats out of 222 in the national parliament.¹⁸¹ Pointing to the fact that conservative Islamic party has no chance in some other more culturally and religiously diverse places, only in a state with a low level of cultural diversity and high level of Islamic religiosity.

In Kelantan and Terengganu, where not even 4% of non-Muslim living in these states; all the Muslim women working here must follow strict rules in accordance with Islam. "Women working in the malls in east coast state must wear the tudung (head covering), there are separate payment counters for men and women in the supermarkets, and the call to prayer is proclaimed loudly five times a day to tell pious men to head to the mosque."¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Amir Yusof, "Malaysia election: Winds of change in Kelantan as voters return home in droves," (May 8, 2018), Available at: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/malaysia-election-wind-of-change-in-kelantan-as-voters-return-10212170>

¹⁸¹ Tan Hui Yee, "Malaysia election: Pollster Merdeka Center expects BN to win poll, but not popular vote," *Straits Time*, (Kuala Lumpur: May 8, 2018), available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysia-election-pollster-merdeka-center-expects-bn-to-win-poll-but-not-popular-vote>

¹⁸² Amir Yusof, "Malaysia election: Winds of change in Kelantan as voters return home in droves."

“Additionally, annual per capita income in Kelantan was RM12,812 in 2016 - less than a third of the RM38,887 for the whole of Malaysia and Terengganu state is right behind.”¹⁸³

The author during his stay in Petaling Jaya (neighbouring city of Kuala Lumpur), observed worried faces of young people while mentioning two most Islamic conservatives parts of Malaysia. Since the author talked to many people, Muslim’s people who grew up or even visited Kelantan, they pointed out, that situation in these states is lacking not only economic progress, but also political progress. Young more progressive and educated people coming from these states are not any more satisfied with the politically-economic situation of Islamic parties, which they lean mostly on the support of older conservative voters as research poll pointed out. Their ideology of enforcing Islamic law is a very powerful tool in such a poor and remote states of Malaysia. It causes extreme support of their Islamic conservative voters, relying upon religious convictions, having a direct effect on conservative views of women’s position in the society.

A majority of people in Kelantan believe that Islam is the way of life then it might have an impact on the society as one participant of questionnaire indicated. Approximately 35% of respondents believe that Islam has an impact on gender inequality in Malaysia. However, some respondents believe it has a positive and some negative impact on women’s status. Student of Islamic studies at University of Malaya indicated that religion is serving for women’s good, protecting women and not discriminating.¹⁸⁴ Another male respondent coming from less religiously diverse part of Malaysia points out that religion like Islam is caring for all genders and inequality is rather caused by lifestyle than a religion.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Amir Yusof, “Malaysia election: Winds of change in Kelantan as voters return home in droves.”

¹⁸⁴ Questionnaire n.34

¹⁸⁵ Questionnaire n.36

Since in many Muslim families, women need to seek approval to work, based on questionnaire's results, a significant majority of respondents believe that seeking approval for women to work is mandatory in Muslim societies. In some conservative households, men would not let women work, believing that it is better for women to stay at home and be a good wife.¹⁸⁶ On the other hand, there are many liberal Muslims who acknowledge the negative impact of religion on women's status, pointing out the fact that religion is influencing values, culture, traditions which are making women subordinate.¹⁸⁷

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter confirmed hypothesis that higher level of religious pluralism can be a counter mitigating point to lessen negative forces of Islamist religion on women's status in Malaysia. The results suggested a significant correlation between level of religious diversity, measured by percentage of non-Muslims living in particular state in Malaysia and level of 'Islamicity', pointing how liberal or conservative Muslims are living in concrete state of Malaysia.

In comparison to MENA countries, Malaysia is possessing with high percentage of non-Muslims living together with majority of Muslim population. Therefore, the uniqueness of cultural pluralism in Malaysia is also serving as variable, mitigating negative forces of Islamic religion, causing in MENA region highest women subordinate as literature review suggested. The results of this chapter confirms that cultural pluralism is playing important role making status of Malaysian women better off compared to women living in MENA region.

Reviewing election results of two most religiously conservative states of Malaysia, Kelantan and Terengganu, pointed out that majority of people are holding very conservative

¹⁸⁶ Questionnaire n.17

¹⁸⁷ Questionnaire n27

views based on their polls preferences. The Islamic political party (PAS), governing state of Kelantan for 28 consecutive years is trying to pass implementation of Sharia law. The poor economic and political conditions connected with religiously conservative viewpoints of Muslims living in these states are obvious according to results of the questionnaires and interviews. People coming from remote parts of Malaysia, are conservative Muslims, influencing position of women in the society by holding conservative views on roles of women.

Therefore, correlation not only numerical, but also correlation throughout the respondents, based on the questionnaires and interviews pointed out that cultural pluralism is powerful and credible variable mitigating negative forces of Islamic religiosity, reducing level of conservativeness of Muslims living in multicultural environment, making Malaysian Muslim's women compared with women located in one of MENA countries more empowered.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

A thesis has analyzed the effects of oil revenues and Islamist religion on gender inequality, indirectly answering why women in Malaysia as oil abundant country are doing better, than in countries of MENA, where women suffer from highest gender inequality gaps. Therefore, the first section of thesis provided the scheme of how oil and Islam is affecting gender inequality index in countries of MENA, proving the far-reaching negative consequences of oil and Islam, keeping women subordinate inside of this region.

According to the literature review and empirical observations, thesis assumed that in all Muslim majority petro states, Islamist religiosity and oil dependency are dragging down gender equality. However, there are four Muslim majority petro states outside of MENA region, which are possessing with vast oil reserves having Muslim majority population and their women can enjoy relatively higher women's status. Existing literature unveiled the significant correlation of both independent variables of Islamist religiosity and oil dependency on gender inequality index, directly affecting women's status in Muslim majority Petro-states. By reviewing the development of gender inequality index in petro-states, the findings pointed out that in some of oil abundant countries, women are doing relatively better in terms of gender equality compared to the others. Moreover, the available evidence seems to suggest that the Dutch Disease theory is a useful theoretical tool for explaining this phenomenon in MENA region.

The female labour supply is shrinking caused by higher male incomes and government oil's transfers, keeping women out of the workfare. The demand for female labour decreases as oil export-oriented, mainly at countries with high dependence on oil export, causing female

dominated manufacturing to be disadvantaged by negative workings of Dutch disease, causing the highest gender inequality to happen in the region of MENA.

Since more oil is produced in the certain country, it makes harder for manufacturing companies to remain profitable. The rise in the exchange rates makes imported goods cheaper, the factories that most likely hire women will be discouraged by Dutch disease; consequently, most of the jobs will be suitable for men. Moreover, women due to higher income levels and also declining initiatives, caused by oil's social redistribution system in MENA states, encouraging women rather stay at household, not contributing into economy nor contributing into improving women's status, as traditional beliefs together with the economic situation are allowing for households to do so. Daily life may be more comfortable for women while staying at home, only taking care of the household, but also more strongly dominated by men.

Moreover, the oil revenues serve as blocking point for democracy to penetrate into political systems of most countries in the region, strengthening autocratic regimes. As the prices of oil are set up high, autocratic regimes in the region are providing relocation of oil revenues to keep themselves empowered, reducing the chance for women to exit household, since it is not needed as in the case of UAE. Oil revenues allowing governments to conduct direct transfers, limiting women chances to seek opportunity outside of their households, as money is not spent into the diversification of the economy, but rather for the strengthening of the ruling regimes, in what could otherwise provide chances for women to seek employment.

The dominance of the oil sector in MENA region causes an economic diversification to be generally low in the countries highly dependent on the carbon resources. As a high inflow of oil's money into the region, the effects of Dutch disease is keeping private sector considerably small and less significant compared to public one. This fact is remaining state

institution powerful and less accountable against its own population, keeping people pacified by oil wealth redistribution. Money transfers together with traditional beliefs, influenced by religion are overall decreasing the will of women to work. Therefore, the oil reliance mixed together with Islamic religion is strongly affiliated, with the low status of women affecting MENA countries to a high extent.

Majority of men in Middle East believe that a woman's place is at home. This old conservative views in the MENA countries shaped by religion are keeping long distance for not only men, but whole society to fully accept and support equality of women in MENA region, as in many parts of the world. A vast majority of the population of Middle East and North Africa views gender inequality as a way of life affected by long-term traditions and culture, rather than religious beliefs. However, the existing work together with empirical studies pointed out the significant correlation between Islam and gender inequality.

Moreover, the religions maintain male social dominance within societal structures, but empirical research on developments in the individual religions, especially in the case of Islam; indicate a negative shift in society towards a decreased status of women. In most of the cultures and religions, conservative traditions prevailing regarding faith are disadvantaging women rather than men. Religious beliefs are penetrating everyday interactions, impacting women's status in the society. The first section also unveiled, that religious people have more conservative views of the role of women in the society, making religion a significant barrier for women to overcome.

In the second part of the thesis, the case study of Malaysia serves as a counter-argument, proving the existence of counter variables, mitigating the negative influence of oil revenues and Islam religiosity, explaining why Malaysian Muslim women are more empowered than Muslim's women living in MENA region. Malaysia poses significant

reserves of crude oil, where women are relatively equal to their male counterparts according to gender equality index. However, Malaysia compared to MENA countries is not economically dependent only on natural resources. In the 1970s, Malaysian GDP was fulfilled mainly by natural resources. However, the fluctuation of prices of natural resources made economic dependency very risky and hard to predict for aggregate economy. Thus, Malaysian government took necessary steps to move forward to an economic transition by diversifying the economy, what over time had a positive effect on female labour force participation, indirectly decreasing gender gap in Malaysia.

United Arab Emirates, as a country with highest economic complexity index within states located in MENA region, is still significantly lacking behind Malaysian economic complexity index, pointing on the fact that MENA countries are dependent on the oil resources to the much higher extent. Therefore, by comparing the role of oil in gender inequality between MENA and Malaysia, the significant differences might occur. Thus, economic diversification is keeping women working in various industries, directly influencing gender inequality index, making women in Malaysia more equal to men.

Based on the hypothesis, states across Malaysia, possessing with a higher degree of religious diversity, they are composed out of more liberal Muslim societies, having a more liberal vision of Islamist components, which are negatively influencing gender inequality. On the other hand, states across Malaysia, which are lacking the higher degree of religious pluralism, would have a more conservative perspective on roles of women shaped by religious beliefs. Significantly positive correlation of Islamic religion and women's status was displayed at literature review; therefore, more liberal ideas have a positive effect on gender inequality, making Malaysian women more equal towards the men.

Examination of the case study of Malaysia proved the validity of the hypothesis that multiculturalism has a positive effect on the gender equality. The Muslim's respondents coming from more culturally and religiously diverse states of Malaysia are holding more liberal views on the role of women, based on the questionnaires' results. The analyses of the election polls also pointed out the fact that Muslim's coming from more remote areas of Malaysia, possessing with a small number of non-Muslims are voting for parties promoting conservative ideas intertwined to a high extent with Islamist way of governing the state, causing higher gender inequality. On the other hand Malaysian states with a higher level of religious pluralism, having a high percentage of non-Muslims living together with Muslims is affecting gender equality in a positive way, making Malaysian women more equal in comparison to women living in one of the states of MENA.

The mixture of long traditions intertwined with Islam and oil revenues are having disastrous consequences undermining women opportunities inside of MENA region, impacting gender inequality index in a negative way. However, this thesis suggesting that Dutch disease and effects of Islamic religiosity have various impacts on different Muslim majority Petro states. Regarding the fact that Malaysia posses with Muslim majority population and vast oil reserves, the religious pluralism and economic diversification serve as credible variables to mitigate the negative effects of oil and Islam, making Malaysian women more equal towards the men in comparison to women in MENA countries.

Appendix: The list of Survey Respondents

Respondents	% of non-Muslim	Age	Gender	Occupation	Islamicity
1	20.9%	20	F	Student	2
2	41.7%	21	M	Student	3
3	3.7%	21	M	Student	6
4	3.7%	24	F	Student	5
5	30.8%	23	M	Electrician	3
6	40.7%	21	F	Student	3
7	40.7%	21	F	Student	2
8	30.8%	22	F	N/A	3
9	40.7%	20	F	Student	2
10	20.9%	22	F	Student	4
11	30.8%	27	F	Student	4
12	13.1%	21	M	Student	3
13	20.9%	20	F	Student	3
14	38.1%	22	F	Student	3
15	3.7%	26	F	Student	4
16	20.9%	22	F	Student	4
17	41.7%	22	F	Student	3
18	38.1%	21	F	Student	3
19	13.1%	22	M	N/A	3
20	40.7%	23	M	Student	2
21	30.1%	20	F	N/A	3
22	30.1%	19	F	N/A	3
23	30.1%	40	F	Executive	6
24	41.7%	30	F	Sales	2
25	30.8%	43	M	Senior Executive	4
26	30.8%	23	M	Student	2
27	40.7%	57	M	Technician	4
28	40.7%	23	M	Student	2
29	30.8%	N/A	M	Student	4
30	30.8%	N/A	M	Student	3
31	30.8%	25	M	Executive Finance	3
32	12.8%	23	M	Student	3
33	42.6%	27	F	Customer Service	2
34	30.8%	27	F	Service Admin.	3
35	30.8%	26	F	Service Admin.	3
36	40.7%	23	F	Student	1
37	40.7%	22	F	Student	1
38	40.7%	23	F	Student	1
39	42.6%	22	M	Student	1
40	30.8%	25	M	Executive Production	2
41	3.7%	21	M	Student	5
42	20.9%	23	M	Student	3

43	30.8%	22	F	Student	2
44	56.0%	22	F	Student	2
45	41.2%	22	F	Student	1
46	56.0%	27	F	teacher	1
47	41.2%	22	F	Student	3
48	41.2%	21	F	Student	3
49	30.8%	21	F	Student	3
50	41.2%	25	F	N/A	3
51	41.2%	21	F	Student	2
52	41.2%	26	F	Student	2
53	41.2%	26	F	Student	5
54	41.2%	22	F	Student	2
55	30.2%	21	N/A	Supervisor	2
56	30.2%	20	F	Student	2



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