

Women Contributions in Human Development: A Study at Women's Shelters in Selangor

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Abstract

Women have occupied positions as important as men in fulfilling their roles towards the development of a nation. Evidently, women have contributed beyond their traditional domestic responsibilities as wives and mothers. In fact, they have been actively participated in various employment sectors, both locally and abroad. In addition, The National Women Policy has already put in place the strategic planning and approaches to empower women towards establishing well educated and trained human resources among women to contribute competitively in nation building activities. In reference to the contribution of women in various fields, this study however focuses on the contributions of women employees in dealing with issues and solving problems faced by women specifically at Baitul Ehsan and Darul Wardah, both are under the purview of the Selangor Women's Shelter. This study is in the form of case study which utilizes qualitative approaches. The data for this study is obtained via interviews and observations on six employees who work at the centers, who are selected on objective consensual sampling basis. The study reveals that the women employees who work at the centers have played good roles in listening and dealing with the problems faced by their residents. Moreover, the employees are known to be very committed and render undivided supports towards the efforts and programs to spiritually and physically develop women who are facing problems with lives, by appropriate means.

Keywords: women's shelter employees, human development, women contributions, women's shelter occupants

Introduction

The involvement of women in fulfilling their traditional responsibilities as wives and mothers, and then extended to their careers has successfully created social reforms and transformations in this region. Women are complimenting men in

efforts for the development of the nation, families, and individuals, as well as resolving common problems in our lives. In the eyes of Allah, men are no better than women and neither is the vice versa, because the different in Allah creations is not for anyone to negate each other, but rather to complement each other. This is explicitly explained by Allah SWT in surah *al-Nahl* (16), verse 97:

Whoever acts righteously; whether a man or a woman-and embrace belief, verily We will grant him good life and will surely grant such persons their reward according to the best of their deeds.

In reality, there are no real differences between men and women except in three aspects; first in physical form, second in the mentality, and third in the responsibilities (based upon their capabilities). However, both men and women need to work in tandem to complement each other in order to achieve balanced and prosperous lives.

It is recorded in history since the times of Rasulullah SAW that women had been actively functioning in society especially in the field of human development. For instance, Aishah R.A had become a distinguished personality in the field of learning and knowledge. Khadijah RA too had provided great assistance in economic matters.¹ Furthermore, Ummu Sulaym and Aminah binti Qays Al-Ghifariyah RA were both involved in battlefield². In the context of Malaysia, the roles of women are no longer limited to within the family framework but have been extended to various other fields such as economics, politics, education, social, and et cetera. The establishment of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Society Development is an evidence for the emphasis being put in place in handling the affairs related to women in this country. This situation has created the awareness of the credibility and the potential possessed by women in contributing for nation building.

Even though the involvement of women in today's society has become so common, still there are certain insufficiencies in various fields of expertise among women. The number of women, who have expertise in issues related to women and family while at the same time very much well versed in Islamic understanding, is

¹ Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *Fiqh Sirah Nabawiyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1991), 5.

² Muḥammad Sayyīd Ṭanṭāwī, *Adāb al-Ḥiwār fī al-Islām* (Kaherah: Dār Nahḍah Miṣr li-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Tawzī', 1997), 20.

still lacking. Muslim women in Malaysia, for instance, are in needs for more experts, especially those who could develop foundations and policies related to women affairs. Thus, in order to produce more calibers among women to face the wave of feminism and others social ills among youths, they need to widen their potentials so that they could contribute more excellently towards the development of human resources.

In our discussing about the issues of human development, it is referring to the need to polish the potentials is at the early stages of humans lives because this has become very important elements of human development to ensure the nation is able to endure challenges and become competitive, especially in this knowledge based global economy which is erected upon science and technology.³ Mahbub ul-Haq, a Muslim scholar defines the concept of human development as:

Process of enlarging people's freedoms and opportunities and improving their well-being. Human development is about the real freedom ordinary people have to decide who to be, what to do and how to live.⁴

Thus, the aspects of human development is so important because it prepares a nation for quality and competitive work forces, good caliber and credible leadership, disciplined and spiritually developed society, better education, world class tertiary institutions, advanced training and competency programs, active Research and Development (R&D) and commercialization activities, effective social and spiritual programs, sufficient economics opportunities, and reduced unemployment and crimes.

Back to the issue of direct women involvement in human development programs, Raihanah Abdullah⁵ opines that women in the modernization era need to possess various skills set in terms of intellectuals, spiritual, and emotional. Therefore, this study carries an objective to analyze the extend of women participations in

³ *Visi Magazine* (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM), 2007).

⁴ Mahbūb ul-Ḥaq, *Reflections on Human Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15.

⁵ Raihanah Abdullah, "Wanita Islam di Malaysia Selepas 50 tahun Kemerdekaan: Pencapaian dan Cabaran", dalam *Wanita Islam, Isu-isu dan Pemerksaan Hak*, ed. Mohd. Roslan Mohd. Nor dan Nor 'Azzah Kamri. (Selangor: Persatuan Ulama' Malaysia, 2011), 87-95.

mobilizing human development programs, especially in dealing with issues faced by women at the Women's shelters in Selangor.

Method

This study utilizes qualitative approaches designed for a case study with the purpose to analyze the extend of women employees participation in resolving the issues faced by the women subjects, specifically in the two women's shelters in Selangor. The two selected women's shelters are Baitul Ehsan and Darul Wardah. In order to fulfill the objective of this study, three data collection methods are used which are documentations, interviews, and observations. Documentation methodology involves data collection derived from written materials such as modules, annual reports, and meeting minutes retrieved from the two institutions. Interview methodology involves verbal question and answer and information taken from the 6 informants among the employees of the centers. Meanwhile, observation methodology is used on the related programs to verify the findings of the above two methodologies. When data collection is duly completed, data analysis is performed using thematic method.

Discussion and Analysis

The study finds that women employees at the women's shelters in Selangor contribute significantly towards the human development in terms of the development of spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects.

A. The Spiritual Development

It consists of the following:

1. Development of Faith (Aqidah)

In Baitul Ehsan, the emphasis on aqidah could be seen from the first element contained in the 9 philosophies of self-improvement drafted by Baitul Ehsan center which is 'FAITHFUL.'⁶ In applying the philosophy, the Baitul Ehsan center make direct use of female teachers to conduct formal aqidah classes involving the occupants of the center twice a week, an hour per session. From these classes, the occupants are taught about aqidah and its importance, types of aqidah, the pillars of iman, the 20-Attributes,

⁶ Ehsan Transformation Module, 2014.

the revocations of iman, the characteristics of Munafiq, Syirik, Murtad, and Kafir.

The aqidah classes are conducted in the form of explanation and notes handouts⁷. The content of the aqidah classes includes daily activities such as Tazkirah Zuhur, Maghrib Lectures, and Usrah.⁸ In this regards, the informants of these study explain that the result of the examination given to those occupants who just registered into the center shows that most occupants are still confused about the pillars of iman and the pillars of Islam. The occupants also used to asking questions about aqidah such as the existence of the angels which could not be seen. Furthermore, the occupants are more receptive to answers that fit their logics, rather than something more abstract⁹.

In Darul Wardah, the study indicates the women's shelter has taken initiatives by focusing on the process of strengthening the aqidah aspect, not only in the aqidah classes but also in classes of other subjects, which indirectly touch upon on aqidah matters, and other spiritual development activities such as tazkirah, Islamic lectures, usrah, and routine gatherings. The presentation materials also come in various forms, verbal or non-verbal.¹⁰ Basically, the topics of aqidah are in tandem with Islam by giving understanding on the six pillars of Iman, which are belief in Allah, belief in the angels, belief in the Messenger of Allah, belief in the Quran, belief in the Day of Judgement, and belief in Qada' and Qadar, as well as knowing the attributes of Allah (the 20-Attributes) and the Names of Allah (*Asmā' al-Husnā*)¹¹.

The learning and teaching sessions are done in a circle with two-way interactions¹². Progressively the Darul Wardah center makes continuous efforts to strengthen the understanding of the occupants about aqidah through Maghrib Lectures, and usrah

⁷ Ehsan Transformation Module, 2014.

⁸ Observation at Baitul Ehsan. 25-28 August 2014.

⁹ Kaminur Nasir (Religious Teacher at Baitul Ehsan), in interview with author, 26 August 2014.

¹⁰ Observation at Darul Wardah. 12-15 May 2014.

¹¹ Hazlina Abdul Razak (Advisor at Darul Wardah), interview with author, 13 August 2014.

¹² Nurhidayah Sumairi (Religious Teacher at Darul Wardah), interview with author, 13 August 2014.

which are conducted on routine basis.¹³ The Darul Wardah Advisor share justification in carrying out the aqidah program based on the reality of the aqidah understanding of the occupants of the center as follows:

When I first interviewed my residents, I asked a lot about the conditions of their solat when they were committing promiscuity? Whether or not they really believed in God? Did they know Allah had watched them? I told them, knowledge only resides in here, I pointed to head which means intellectual. But can feel Allah here? I pointed to the heart. *Hā hunā al-Taqwa*. This is where taqwa resides. After that, they kept quiet. This means, they have problem with their iman. I call this 'jelly iman'. It may look hard, but actually very soft inside. Everything looks perfect, but don't really live up to their iman. Their iman is fragile. They've got 8A1 in SPM, but they don't perform solat. Some may be uneducated, but the problem is even those in tertiary institutions are here. Every university has their students here, even from Islamic university and even those who are taking diploma in Islamic studies are here. They are highly intellectual but they have no faith. There is no effect of iman upon them.¹⁴

Based on the above information, it is rather clear that those women who are being placed at the center are having crisis in faith and are rather weak in their aqidah so much so that it has been difficult for them to believe in something beyond physical existence, such as the existence of Allah which a very basic truth in Islamic faith. Their faith could not be extended beyond logic. The occupants of the center are said to be lacking in their appreciation of their faith even though they have religious education background. This lacking had lured them into vice activities with neither due consideration of sins and the consequence punishments in the hereafter, or any feel of remorse. The finding of a study by Roslee Ahmad et al¹⁵ indicates that

¹³ Nor'ashikin Mat Said (Manager at Darul Wardah), interview with author, 13 August 2014.

¹⁴ Hazlina Abdul Razak, interview with author, 13 August 2014.

¹⁵ Roslee Ahmad et al., "Strategi Intervensi Menangani Penyelewengan Tingkah Laku Seksual Berdasarkan Model al-Ghazali," (Makalah, Persidangan

many counselors admit their clients were engaging in illicit sexual conducts because of lack iman which lured them into such vices.

The relation between iman and akhlak had been explained by al-Mawdūdī¹⁶ who said that the presence of iman or aqidah in a person is the main pre-requisite that produce the kind of mentality for that individual which eventually bring about certain manner that is not only good, but also eradicate negative values in his heart. One's attachment to his aqidah will guide him towards Allah, acknowledging His greatness and worrying about His displeasure at all times and situation. Therefore, man would not submit to his lust, but would rather be obedient to his Lord, instead.¹⁷ Even though, humans are naturally inclined towards goodness, there are times their lust could get the better of them. Thus, it is the aqidah who would protect them and guide them accordingly.¹⁸ From this explanation, it can be derived that the weakness in aqidah could be factor that makes the occupants to be less aware about avoiding sins in front of Allah SWT and easily derailed by their lust.

According to Islam, profound understanding in the pillars of iman would have effects on the life of an individual. Believing in Allah would render the feeling of fear to disobey Him. Believing in the angels would cause the occupants to be more cautious when considering that all their actions, good or bad, will be recorded. Believing in the Messenger of Allah would encourage the occupants to follow the teachings and traditions of the Messenger of Allah. Believing in the Quran would make the occupants hold firmly to its commands and the prohibitions. Believing in the Days of Judgement would also create fear with the consequences of committing vices and at the same time inspire good deeds. Finally, believing in qada' and qadar gives hopes to the occupants of the center to repent and have good trust in Allah that everything that happens in life is under Allah's wills. In short,

Kaunseling Kebangsaan, Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris, 3-5 November 2009).

¹⁶ Abū 'A'lā' al-Mawdūdī, *Mabādi' al-Islām* (T.tp.: al-Maktabah al-Islāmī, 1977), 93.

¹⁷ 'Abd Allāh Nāṣih 'Ulwān, *Tarbiyyah al-Awlad fī al-Islām* (Kaherah: Dār al-Salām, 1976), 2:205-240.

¹⁸ Haron Din, *Manusia dan Islam* (Shah Alam: Hizbi Sdn. Bhd, 2003), 27.

strong belief in the six pillars of iman is very potential to inculcate good values to be closer to Allah.

The need for aqidah inculcation towards problematic individuals has been proven by a finding by Zaizul Ab Rahman¹⁹ which says most inmates believe that the strength in faith and religion could hinder them from repeating the crime and improve their conducts. With that, the findings of this study indicates that the effort by the employees to strengthen the faiths of the occupants is definitely in tandem with the suggestions of al-Ghazālī and Nāṣiḥ ‘Ulwān who suggested those problematic occupants shall be re-attached to their aqidah in order for them to have the strength to adhere to Allah’s commands, to realize the greatness and superiority of Allah, to feel the existence of Allah the Most Knowing, Most Powerful, and Most Just. When they are fully nurtured with iman and exposed to the attributes of Allah, they will constantly feel observed by Allah and thus leads them to control themselves from doing bad deeds caused by their lusts physically and spiritually.²⁰ Studying aqidah can improve the occupants’ spiritual and hence comprehend the concept of ihsan better and make it as a way of life until they can balance the physical and spiritual needs.²¹

Obviously, the initiative of the women’s shelters in focusing on strengthening aqidah of the occupants has not only increased their iman as a servant of Allah but has also inspired them to practically live up as a Khalifah of Allah. In the context of being servant to the Lord, the strength in aqidah will generate the feeling of both, fear and love, towards Allah and thus increase their obedience in seeking the pleasure of Allah. In the aspects of being Khalifah of Allah, the strength in aqidah will impact the conducts of the occupants in avoiding His prohibitions and in adhering to His instructions. This will protect them from falling prey into the same acts of misconducts that could corrupt themselves and others in the future.

¹⁹ Zaizul Ab. Rahman, “Faktor Dorongan Jenayah Rogol di Malaysia dan Program Pemulihannya: Kajian di Penjara Sungai Udang, Melaka,” (PhD Thesis, Universiti Malaya, 2012).

²⁰ Nāṣiḥ ‘Ulwān, *Tarbiyyah al-Awḷād fī al-Islām*, 2:1976, 164.

²¹ Hasnan Kasan, *Pendidikan Remaja Muslim* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), 2008), 70.

2. The Realization of Ibadah

In Baitul Ehsan, women employees assists in nurturing to learn topics related to ibadah such as *tahārah*, types of water, types of *najis* and ways to clean them, *ghusl* (obligatory bathing), details of fasting, reading the Quran, zakat, hajj, *zabīḥah* (slaughtering animal), qurban and aqiqah.

Those occupants, who are already at more advanced classes in level 3 and level 4, must enroll a class with the subject of fiqh for women. In this class, the occupants are exposed to more profound topics related to ibadah such as the fiqh of womanhood, the fiqh of jurisprudence, the sources of fiqh in Islam, some terminologies in the subjects of fiqh and *tahārah* which covers the topics of *tahārah*, hijab, khatam for women, the categories of impurity and major impurity, menstruation and post natal-bleeding, *haiḍ* (menstrual).²² Darul Wardah also emphasizes on the aspects of ibadah through Islamic classes conducted daily for duration of two hours. The classes are conducted to enhance the occupants' understanding about the pillars of Islam including the practical of performing hajj, umbra, qurban, managing the rituals related to dead body, *tahārah*, solat and tayammum.²³

Apart from the in-class learning, the topics of ibadah are also covered through other religious activities such as Zuhur Tazkirah, Maghrib Lectures, and usrah. Furthermore, the study finds that the centers also focus on the implementation of primary ibadah in the pillars of Islam which are solat, fasting, reading the Quran and zikir, wirid, and prayers.²⁴

a. Performing Solat.

The study finds that the primary ibadah being focused in the centers are performing regular solat five times a day in congregation. In Baitul Ehsan, solat is particularly emphasized in view of the facts that most occupants had poor track records in this aspect. Even though some of them claim they know how to

²² Ehsan Transformation Module, 2014.

²³ Nurhidayah Sumairi, interview with author, 13 August 2014.

²⁴ Observation at Baitul Ehsan, 25-28 August 2014; Observation at Darul Wardah, 12-15 May 2014.

perform solat, they actually do not know how to do it.²⁵ In addition, upon some evaluation most of the occupants do not possess knowledge about performing solat except the recitation of surah *al-Fātiḥah*.²⁶

This phenomenon has triggered Baitul Ehsan to conduct special class to enhance their understanding about solat called “Smart Solat” every week with the objective to enhance the understanding of the occupants in performing solat. Among the topics covered during the “Smart Solat” session is practical wudhu’. This is so because, the right wudhu’ would eventually lead to quality of a solah. The Smart Solat also enlighten about some leniency (*rukḥṣah*) in performing solat.²⁷

On the other hand, in Darul Wardah, the informants explain the center would emphasize on performing obligatory solat in view that these solat function as self-fortification when correctly practiced. Otherwise, the self-fortification could be weakened and eventually collapsed, unable to save then engaging in various misconducts. Even though some occupants came from family with strong religious background and religious education, they often conveniently ignore the obligation, even after being reminded.²⁸ Apart from obligatory solat, the study also finds the center emphasize a lot on performing *qiyām al-layl* (midnight solat). The final third in the night would be spent performing solat tahajjud, solat taubat, solat hajat, and solat witr. In addition, the recommended solat Duha is also being routinely practiced in both Baitul Ehsan and Darul Wardah.²⁹ The study by Khadijah Alavi et al³⁰ indicates that the youths who were pregnant and had engaged in illicit sexual misconducts were those who regularly skipped and ignoring advises and reminders of their parents.

It is then very imperative to note that solat is being particularly emphasized by the women’s shelter shows that the

²⁵ Halimatun Mohd. Ngalim (Religious Teacher at Baitul Ehsan), interview with author, 27 August 2014.

²⁶ Kaminur Nasir, interview with author, 26 August 2014.

²⁷ Kaminur Nasir, interview with author, 26 August 2014.

²⁸ Hazlina Abdul Razak, interview with author, 13 August 2014.

²⁹ Halimatun Mohd. Ngalim, interview with author, 27 August 2014; Hazlina Abdul razak, interview with author, 14 August 2014.

³⁰ Khadijah Alavi et al., “Hamil Luar Nikah dalam Kalangan Remaja,” *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2012), 131-140.

employees truly understand the importance of solat as an ibadah in their efforts to lead the occupants towards improvements. This finding indirectly supports the previous finding studied by Fazilah Idris et.al which indicates that solat functions as the most effective barrier keeping youths from engaging in misconducts. In addition,³¹ a study by Azmawaty Mohamad Nor et al. also find that solat has triggered positive changes among youths in the protection during their pregnancy in which led them to put their trust in Allah and being closer to Allah as a source of tranquility they could find assurance by being closer to Allah.³²

Solat in Islam has been widely acknowledged to function in forming one's attitudes and acts as foundation of other ibadah.³³ Even though solat possess a lot of wisdom behind it, the Quran in surah al-‘Ankābūt verse 45 has spelled clearly that it is the quality of solat, which is performed with utmost humility and wholeheartedness that could hinder a person from evil acts. According to al-Ghazālī³⁴, humility and wholeheartedness could not be achieved except with sound knowledge, remorse, reverence, and fear. Thus, the initiative by Baitul Ehsan in conducting the Smart Solat is considered a correct move in adhering to al-Ghazālī proposal in helping the occupants to strengthen their understanding about solat as a practical way to achieve an ideal solat. In short, the employees have contributed in the efforts to strengthen the function of solat through various approaches in fulfilling basic individual religious obligations. These efforts do not just merely educate the occupants about to achieve quality solat, but also inculcate better conducts among them especially in hindering them from repeating misconducts as per explanation of the Quran in surah al-‘Ankābūt verse 45.

³¹ Fazilah Idris et al., “A Path Analysis Approach on the Effects of Faith-Based Behavior on Religious Delinquent Behavior Among Youth,” *Research Journal of Applied Sciences* 8, no.1 (2013), 89-95.

³² Azmawaty Mohamad Nor et al., “The Turning Point in an Unwanted Teenage Pregnancy: A Psychoemotional Perspective,” *Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences*, 15(SUPP1) (April 2019), 30-36.

³³ Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *Islam, Iman & Amal* (Johor Baharu: Perniagaan Jahabersa, 1996),161.

³⁴ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Minhāj al-‘Ārifīn* (Kaherah: Maṭba‘ah al-Bābī al- Ḥalabī wa Awlādih, t.t.), 104.

b. Reciting the Quran

Besides the ibadah of solat, the employees at the women's shelters also assist in the efforts to make the occupants be closer to the Quran. The occupants are required to attend classes that help them enhancing their knowledge of the Quran as a complimentary curriculum, such as the class of *tahsīn al-Quran*, tajweed, Iqra', tafsir and series of Quranic verses memorization activities.³⁵ Moreover, the practice of reciting the Quran has become routine activities in Darul Wardah in view of the fact that most occupants are lacking the skill in the recitation of the Quran. According to the informants in Darul Wardah:

Actually the kids had long forgotten their religion, and religion had also long forgotten them. That was it. It means, from their early ages they all had been well nurtured with religion but at a point of their age they had forgotten it all. When they were away, they forgot it. When we asked them - had they recited the Quran before? They all had. Had they completed (khatam) the Qur'an? They had. – But, we pointed to a alphabet, they could forget and they could not spell it correctly. They could not make clear sound of it. Seems like we had to start all over again, just like when they were in year 1 when they were just introduced to the Quran³⁶.

Based on this information, the lives of the occupants before being recruited to the centers were rather distant from the Quran, let alone appreciating the teachings which are contained in the Quran.

With this reality that the occupants were indeed very much remote from the Quran, it would not be too far-fetched to say that these various initiatives being conducted by these women employees at the centers could potentially re-attached them to the Quran. Through these classes of Iqra', tajweed, and tafsir, they could lend assistance to the occupants to recognize Quranic letters and improve their recitation of the Quran, especially during solat. Not only that, the frequency of them reciting the Quran could indirectly help them to better understand the language and the meaning of the verses, its instructions and prohibitions, as well as understanding the lessons derived from it. Lastly, this curriculum

³⁵ Ehsan Transformation Module, 2014.

³⁶ Hazlina Abdul Razak, interview with author, 13 August 2014.

conducted in consistent basis could help the occupants to appreciate the miracle of the Quran which is inculcate good personalities upon them as Muslim youths who love and fear Allah. In short, this study has indicated that the curriculum conducted related to recitation of the Quran has helped the occupants not only in increasing the quality of their ritual practices, but also in the aspect of their spiritual development by reclaiming their tranquility after much problems and difficulties in their lives.

The finding of the study by Azmawaty Mohd Nor et al.,³⁷ had also revealed that the occupants admitted that the practice of reciting the Quran during their tenure in the centers had pacified their soul and made them closer to Allah. In matters pertaining to spiritual disturbances, the Quranic verses have been acknowledged to have some effective remedial effects towards the broken souls.³⁸ The values contained in the Quranic verses are so profound, so much so by reciting them alone could have enlightened one's personality; increasing their fear, belief, and tawakal.³⁹

c. Fasting

This study has shown that fasting, as one of the pillar of Islam, is also being emphasized by the women's shelters, apart from solat and reciting the Quran. According to the informants during interview, the women employees at the centers have always encouraged the occupants about the importance and benefits of fasting. The occupants are not only coached to fast during Ramadan, in fact the recommended (sunat) fasting is also encouraged.⁴⁰

Similar to other ibadah, fasting has its own unique benefits. In a hadith it was narrated that the Prophet explained fasting as a

³⁷ Azmawaty Mohamad Nor, "*Understanding Adolescents' Experience with an Unwanted Pregnancy*" (PhD Thesis, Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Malaya, 2015).

³⁸ Surah Yūsuf, 10:52.

³⁹ Hasan Langgulung, *Asas-asas Pendidikan Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1991), 401.

⁴⁰ Halimatun Mohd. Ngalim, interview with author, 27 August 2014; Hazlina Abdul Razak, interview with author, 13 August 2014.

barrier that protects oneself against lust.⁴¹ This fact is also affirmed by Sa'īd Ḥawwā⁴² who said that fasting could have lasting effects in curing problems related to lust which stemmed from one's private part and stomach, through self-restrained and sincere submission. This is so because, according to al-Ghazālī fasting is not only training our stomach but also other body parts such as mouth, eyes, ears, hands, private parts, legs, and others from indulging in vices, causing Allah's wrath. Thus the encouragement to fast is potentially beneficial physically and spiritually by inculcating self-restraint as per the teaching of Islam.

d. Zikir, Wirid and Prayer

The study indicates the occupants in the women's shelter are also spiritually coached with certain rituals such as zikir, wirid and some regular prayers as daily practices. In Baitul Ehsan, each occupant is provided with a booklet to guide her practicing prayers, zikir, and wirid. In the booklet, there are various prayer recitations such as the prayer before sleeping, after waking up, entering toilets, exiting toilets, after wudhu', using mirror, applying clothing, removing clothing, entering and exiting masjid, before and after meals, entering and exiting houses, entering vehicles, learning, before and after reciting the Quran, after azan, after an occasions, asking protection from Allah, asking protection from being lazy, stingy, frugal, and disappointed, during prostration of sajdah, and the sajdah of sahwī. Apart from prayer recitation, the guide booklet for recommended solat such as solat duha, taubat, hajjat, tahajjud, witr, wirid and rawatib and istikharah is also provided. The occupants also received booklet on various types of salawat such as salawat syifa', selawat an-nur, selawat tafrijiyah, daily zikir of Imam al-Ghazali.⁴³ Among the objective of these collections of zikir and prayers is to strengthen

⁴¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Nikāḥ, Bāb Man Lam Yastaḥī' al-Bā'ah Falyaṣūm, no. Hadith: 5066. See Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl bin Ibrāhīm bin al-Mughīrah bin Bardizbah, "Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī," dalam *Mawsū'at al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf: al-Kutub al-Sittah*, ed. Ṣāliḥ bin 'Abd al-Azīz Āli al-Shaykh (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 2000), 910.

⁴² Sa'īd Ḥawwā, *Tarbiyatunā al-Rūḥiyyah* (Ed. 10, Kaherah: Dār al-Salām, 2009), 149.

⁴³ Ehsan Transformation Module, 2014.

them spiritually because there are among them who are sexually addicted and believed to suffer disturbances from immaterial force. According to informants, every time before the classes start, the occupants are required to say istighfar and then followed by the recitation of prayer.⁴⁴ Zikir is not only being emphasized in Baitul Ehsan, in fact Darul Wardah too is emphasizing on prayer, zikir, wirid, al-Ma'thurat recitation as routine practice because it is believed that such practices could strengthen the occupants spiritually. According to an informant:

Usually when I handle such cases among the occupants, I focus on the asma' al-husna to sharpen their intuition through zikrullah. It is actually a natural treatment but it has been fully developed. Indeed, the true defense is in our own selves.⁴⁵

Based on the above finding both women's shelters, indeed, understand the importance of zikir in the rehabilitation program of the occupants. In this regards, the initiatives taken by the women's shelters in providing the occupants with the guidance of zikir, wirid and prayers is a good step. This is because the practice of zikir, wirid, and prayer could inspire them to remember Allah all the times, and thus indirectly becoming more dependent towards Allah in everything they do, from small deeds up to major undertakings. In the end, these practices will make them closer to Allah and provide a sense that they are always under watchful observation from Allah. Therefore, every act, either exposed or hidden would be in accordance to Allah's commands.

According to testimony from a professor who had suffered from cancer, he admitted that the practices of zikir which was done systematically and earnestly could be surprisingly effective, not only as mere tranquilizer but also more as curative agent which eventually led him to full recovery from cancer⁴⁶ This testimony clearly affirms the effectiveness of the Islamic psychotherapy approach which is cited in a previous study. For instance, a study by Nor azah and Che Zarrina suggests Islamic psychotherapy which contains religious kinds of modules as an

⁴⁴ Halimatun Mohd. Ngalm, interview with author, 27 August 2014.

⁴⁵ Hazlina Abdul Razak, interview with author, 13 August 2014.

⁴⁶ H. M. Amin Syukur, "Terapi Zikir" (Makalah Wacana Psikoterapi Islam, Akademi Pengajian Islam, Universiti Malaya Kuala Lumpur, 14 Julai 2012).

alternative in treating social ills such as addiction to pornographic materials among youths.⁴⁷ In reality, the initiatives taken by the women's shelters in bringing the occupants closer to the Lord through the practices of zikir, wirid, and prayers are in tandem with the Quranic verses which urges to remember Allah at all times.⁴⁸ All of these practices are also important basic training and had been given priority by Said Hawwa in the process of producing superior human capital.⁴⁹

In general, all types of ibadah, either the compulsory or recommended, which are practiced routinely in the centers are not only contributing to helping the occupants in terms of salvation in their faiths, but also in improving their conducts. The practices of ibadah in the centers such as solat, fasting, reciting the Quran, zikir, wirid, and prayers have been useful in polishing their spirituality, but also reaffirming their relationship with Allah, strengthening the relationship with people and instilling emphatic attitude in their personalities in all their dealings in lives. It is quite reasonable to say that the practices of ibadah in the centers have had effective implications in two aspects on the occupants. Firstly, in the intellectual context meaning and method of performing ibadah has increased the level of understanding about the true meaning of the concept of ibadah. Secondly, in the context of spirituality, the practices of ibadah with good understanding would also elevate the values of 'ubudiyah among the occupants in their efforts to strengthen the spiritual bond with Allah, and to appreciate the wisdom behind the practices of ibadah.

B. The Physical Development

This study finds out that the women employees in the both women's shelters have actively been functioning in assisting the occupants in their physical developments. In Baitul Ehsan, the

⁴⁷ Nor Azah Ab. Aziz and Che Zarrina Sa'ari "Menangani Permasalahan Laman Web Pornografi: Antara Perisian Penapis, Penguatkuasaan Undang-undang dan Amalan Spiritual", *Journal of Islamic and Arabic Education* 3, no. 1 (2011), 29-46.

⁴⁸ Surah Muzammil, 74:8.

⁴⁹ Muhamad Alihanafiah Norasid, "Manhaj Rabbani oleh Sa'īd Ḥawwā dalam Pembangunan Modal Insan: Tumpuan kepada Karya al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr," *Jurnal Usuluddin* 33 (Januari-Jun 2011), 89-112.

main issue that is emphasized is the training on certain skills through classes such as sewing class, cooking class, handicraft class, and cultivation.⁵⁰ In Darul Wardah too, the physical development of the occupants is emphasized accordingly, such as bouquet course, handicraft, and saloon. These programs could also kill times for the occupants who might feel bored. The occupants can nurture their talents and interest.⁵¹ The yields of these programs at the center would then be used for display or even for commercial sales.⁵²

Based on the above finding, the employees of the center do not only help occupants spending times on something beneficial, but also polish the potential and skills of the occupants. This initiative at least has helped to foster value added elements among the occupants which could be used to generate income when they finished their tenure in the centers. The study finds that before the occupants were sent to this center, they had spent their times mostly in vain, such as going out with friends, surfing pornographic websites, and entertainment.⁵³ Thus, all the classes that develop their skills and potentials during their tenure at the centers have assisted them to make full use of their times.

C. The Intellectual Development

Apart from focusing on the spiritual and physical development, the employees of the women's shelters also work on the development of the intellectual of the occupants. In respect of this aspect of development needs, Khadijah Mohd Khambali et al., In her study of Ibn Khaldun explained that the glory of a man lies in the ability to think and the power of science that is guided by faith and devotion to Allah.⁵⁴ In Baitul Ehsan, the occupants are allowed to

⁵⁰ Nor Afniza Kahpi (Executive of Counseling unit HEP, Pusat perlindungan Wanita Baitul Ehsan). Interview with author, 25 August 2014.

⁵¹ Nor'ashikin Mat Said, interview with author, 13 August 2014.

⁵² Observation at Darul Wardah, 12-15 May 2014.

⁵³ Nurul Husna Mansor, "Modul Keagamaan untuk Remaja Hamil Luar Nikah di Pusat Perlindungan Wanita di Selangor: Kajian Pelaksanaan dan Masalah" (PhD Thesis, Universiti Malaya, 2016), 270-280.

⁵⁴ Khadijah Mohd Khambali @Hambali, NorAdina i Abdul Kadir dan Khairul Anuar Mohd Amin Khir, "Relevansi Pemikiran Ibn Khaldun Terhadap Kemahiran Insaniah di dalam Pengurusan Pembangunan Modal Insan" *Jurnal Usuluddin* (2011), 21-46.

enroll in formal schools and sit for examinations to obtain formal certifications just as their peers outside. The women's shelter provides them with tuition classes and performs regular assessment with regards to their intellectual achievements.⁵⁵ Darul Wardah, on the other hand, allows the occupants to enroll in academic classes as well as fardhu 'ain classes. The need for knowledge is definitely being emphasized there. As a proof, the occupants are required to attend group learning sessions which are supervised by trained teachers.⁵⁶ Each instructor assigned in both centers utilized various approaches to disseminate knowledge such as lectures and discussion sessions.⁵⁷

Clearly, the intellectual development needs to be addressed because it could help the occupants to sharpen their mind and be more creative. The study shows, most occupants came from school drop outs and their academic study was disrupted after getting involved with social problems. Besides, there are occupants who came from very poor family who could not afford to provide them with education. There were still illiterate even at adolescent ages.⁵⁸ Thus, learning activities conducted by the employees indirectly would help the occupants to enhance their knowledge and skills. These skills could be made into full use when they finish their terms in the centers. Allah has indeed elevated the status of those who possess knowledge above those who do not as in surah al-Mujadalah, verse 11:

Allah will indeed raise the believers among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees.

People of knowledge would be paved their ways to paradise by Allah and will always be supplicated by the angels. With the knowledge that they possess, that will also change the negative perception against them by the society, and thus would qualify them for employment which will then secure their future in lives in whatever fields they choose to embark.

⁵⁵ Nor Afniza Kahpi, interview with author, 25 August 2014.

⁵⁶ Nor'ashikin Mat Said, interview with author, 13 August 2014.

⁵⁷ Observation at Baitul Ehsan, 25-28 August 2014; Observation at Darul Wardah, 12-15 May 2014.

⁵⁸ Nurul Husna Mansor, "Modul Keagamaan untuk Remaja Hamil Luar Nikah di Pusat Perlindungan Wanita di Selangor: Kajian Pelaksanaan dan Masalah".

D. Emotional Development

The women employees at both women's shelters in Selangor have been identified to be contributing in the emotional development aspect of the occupants. Among the platforms used are through counseling and guidance sessions. In Baitul Ehsan, counseling and guidance sessions are conducted as a process to enhance motivation and self-potential.⁵⁹ The occupants are emotionally trained through various lectures, workshop, and socialization process. Apart from that, every occupant is provided with a diary. Occupants are encouraged to pour all their problems in the diary. Then, within a stipulated time frame, the employees would assess the diary and evaluate the problems faced by the occupants. A meeting session would be arranged either on individual basis or in group to discuss the way out. Besides the formal counseling sessions, emotional supports also given in an informal manner. For instance, the occupants may sometime meet the employees outside the formal sessions to discuss their problems, seek advices and guidance, and develop trust among them.⁶⁰

In Darul Wardah too, the women employees take part as advisors and guides in dealing with the problems raised by occupants. Through the counseling and guidance sessions, the occupants would be guided and advised if they have problems. Sometimes, the employees used environmental therapy approach. The occupants would be brought to engage in outdoor activities so that they could develop sense of belongingness to the environment. The activities would also inculcate awareness about the superiority of Allah who created all things and provide shooting effects to their souls.⁶¹

Psychologically, the study by Nor Jana Saim⁶² indicates that those women being placed at the women's shelters suffer from fear, embarrassment, and guilt because they had been disowned by their families and society. Thus, the roles played by the employees at the centers are to provide emotional supports. The sessions are

⁵⁹ Ehsan Transformation Module, 2014.

⁶⁰ Nor Afniza Kahpi, interview with author, 25 August 2014.

⁶¹ Nor'ashikin Mat Said, interview with author, 13 August 2014.

⁶² Nor Jana Saim, "Social Support, Coping, Resilience and Mental Health in Malaysian Unwed Young Pregnant Women and Young Mothers Their Experiences While Living in a Shelter Home." (Tesis kedoktoran Psikologi, Umeå University, Sweden, 2013).

not only helping the occupants to be more critical in finding solution to their problems. In fact, indirectly this will create some bonding among the occupants and the employees.

Clearly, the women employees seem to be emphatic listeners and provide loving motherly figures to those young women, while at the same time remain firm. Thus, it will overcome the feeling of being excluded by the society. Based on previous studies conducted by Khairul Hamimah et al., the focus of support in the form of emotional recovery from the troubled individuals appears to have helped them in the context of behavioral change and self-development in a better way.⁶³

Table 1: Contribution of Women in the Human Development at Women’s Shelters in Selangor

| Contribution aspect | Platform | Objective |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Spiritual Development | Religious classes such as aqidah, ibadah and akhlak/manner. Daily ibadah such as solat, Quran recitation, zikir, wirid, and et cetera | Spiritual upbringing to bring the occupants closer to religion in their lives. Divine bonding, spiritual strength, validity of ibadah, moral conduct. Appreciation of religious way of lives helps them avoid misconducts. |
| Physical Development | Development of skills such as sewing, cooking, and handicraft classes. | Help the occupants to enhance their skills and polish their potential so that they have value added elements in them to survive on their own when their tenure at the center ends. These skills could have some commercial aspects to generate income for them and family. |

⁶³ Khairul Hamimah Mohammad. Jodi, Mohd. Fauzi Hamat dan Hadenan Towpek, “Nilai-nilai Islam dalam Program Pemulihan Banduanita di Penjara”, *Jurnal Usuluddin* 35 (Januari-Jun 2012), 99-116.

| Contribution aspect | Platform | Objective |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Intellectual Development | Academic classes such as tuition, regular assessment, and examination. | Help sharpening their intellectual capabilities by coaching them to think and derive things from knowledge. When they are fully occupied with beneficial activities that will keep the occupants away from being lured again into vices. |
| Emotional Development | Counseling and guidance (individual and group) | Listening, Obtaining Trust, Lending Support. Counseling sessions, emphatic listening sessions, getting them involved, inspire positive attitudes, inculcate maturity, self-confidence. Develop personality, strong wills, and self-improvement. |

Source: Interview and Observation

Conclusion

Based on the above finding and discussion, the women employees at the women’s shelters have played optimum roles in helping the occupants. Even though the employees do have their own responsibilities towards their families this does not prevent them from discharging their social responsibilities. Thus, the efforts put forth by the women employees in dealing with the issues faced by the occupants should be commended. Even more so, managing women occupants at the centers is rather complicated and requires a lot of perseverance. It is fair to say that the existence of the women’s shelters has provided opportunities for women to engage, strengthen their roles and self-potential to help among the women in realizing the objective to develop human beings.

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