

Islamic Concept of Dignity of Labour and it's Effect on the Nascent Entrepreneurship Model

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ABSTRACT

Islam as an important force that influences economic development and business performance and it is not impediment to business development, entrepreneurship and skill acquisition. Its economic system view of entrepreneurship is an integral part of wealth creation for Muslims. The objective of this paper is to see how the concept of Islamic dignity of labour could assist Muslim participants in the area of entrepreneurship. The methodology of this research is theoretical, hence; it applied qualitative approach. The data collection was conducted through personal views of experts in the area of Islamic worldview, Islamic entrepreneurship, ethics and understanding of al-Qur'an, Sunnah and other Islamic sources. There is no doubt that if the Islamic concept of dignity of labour is adhered to, it would assist the Muslims to identify the lawful and the unlawful aspects of participation in the area of entrepreneurship. Findings showed effect of the Islamic ethical model on the Islamic entrepreneurship design. It is therefore recommended that whatever role the Muslims want to play in the area of entrepreneurship, the ethics inherent in the Islamic concept of dignity of labour should be applied

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has become a defining business trend around the world, especially in economies transitioning towards free market systems. Some of the developing countries in Africa, Nigeria inclusive are growing lucrative marketplace that have captured the interest of the world for political and economic reasons. Federal and State government have left no stone unturned in achieving a great end in this area. Educational institutions of higher learning are seriously involved by introducing entrepreneurship as one of the courses in their curriculum for the undergraduate levels.

Religion is a driving force exerting great influence on economic development and business performance. Some uniformed Muslims still considered Islam as an impediment to business development, entrepreneurship and skill acquisition, yet Islamic economic system view entrepreneurship and skill acquisition as an integral part of wealth creation for Muslims. It is true that Islam has prescribed many ways to enhance the economic lives of the Muslims as the world is moving fast in maximizing the economic life of every nation. This research explores the impact of dignity of labour - in the Islamic perspective - on the entrepreneurship model as it affects the performance of Muslims in their involvement in this trend.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework Analysis

Choudhury (1986) posited that the theory of consumer demand is steeped in the postulate of economic rationality which stated that of all the consumptions alternatives available to an individual he chooses the one that maximizes his gain. This same concept of economic rationality is extended to the case of the producer and the organization as decision-makers.

The proposed models of Islamic perspective of entrepreneurship have clearly added a new and major dimension to the concept of entrepreneurship where its roots are spread in the knowledge provided by the glorious religion of Islam.

“The term Islam itself is an Arabic word meaning ‘submission to God–Allah,’ with its roots in the Arabic word ‘Salam’ which literally means peace. That may come as a surprise to many non-Muslims, whose perceptions of the belief have been distorted by terrorists, many from the Middle East, whose acts in the name of Islam have been condemned by Muslim leaders everywhere.” Belt (2002)

In addition, there is also perception that religiosity is a major obstacle to development. Marzuki et. al (2016) cites “Yeganeh (2013) who conducted a study on cultural and religiosity aspects on the determinants of national competitiveness and concludes that regardless of religious denomination, religiosity is a major hindrance to national competitiveness”.

Scholars have suggested that one of the main themes in the Islamic Entrepreneurship shall be the Islamic business ethics. Muhammad et. al (2013) proposed in their study that when a business is clear of its core purpose and values and aligns its brand, it is more likely to attract and keeps talented people, reduce inefficiency and stress caused by conflicting messages and also attract more clients, customers and also suppliers who deliver goods to the same high standards. The clearer importance of business ethics will assist the business leaders to implement and practice ethical business and management.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research is theoretical, hence, it applies qualitative approaches. The data collection was done through personal views of experts in the area of Islamic worldview, Islam and entrepreneurship, Islamic entrepreneurship, Islamic ethics and understanding of al-Qur'an, *Sunnah* and other Islamic sources. Results and findings are used as the effect of the Islamic ethical model on the Islamic entrepreneurship design.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The Quranic Perspective of Entrepreneurship

Islam lays important stress on the necessity and dignity of hard work and dignity of taking on profession. The law is laid down in the scripture in a very clear and unambiguous way form to the extent that if someone does not work he would not deserve any wage or reward, Allah says in Quran: 53. V. 39 - 41

وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ ٣٩

39. And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for-

وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ

يُرَىٰ ٤٠

40. And that his striving shall soon be seen-

ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْأَوْفَىٰ ٤١

41. Then shall he be rewarded for it with the fullest reward-

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهِ وَإِنَّا لَهُ كَاتِبُونَ ٩٤

94. Therefore whoever shall do of good deeds and he is a believer, there shall be no denying of his exertion, and surely We will write (It) down for him.

According to Sabuni, 260 citing Ibn Kathir, 404 and Khazin, 223, man has no reward except what he strived for. Man will only reap the fruit of his deeds; if good the reward will be good and if it is otherwise the reward will be so. He also believes that these verses are good tidings for the believers and bad news for the unbelievers

That is the translation of these verse according Muhammad Ali and Yusuf Ali translated it as the words *sāc* and *sa^cy* translated as exertion and striving used in the translations of some translators of the Quran also have the connotation of labour.

The expression such as: “those who believe and do good” is repeated always in the Quran to describe the faithful. And according to Tabari in *surat ra^cd* .29 “those who believe and do good, blessed are they and a good return” as this could apply to man’s supplications, it could also apply the mundane affairs which entrepreneurship is part of.

Entrepreneurship in Islam

The Prophet himself was a hard working person who used to establish salat the whole two third of the night or half of it as supplication to seek the pleasure of Allah, he would also do a lot of activities in the day. He would not count any work too low for him as a Prophet of Allah. He would milk his own goats, patch his own clothes and mend his own shoes. He would dust the house and assist his wife in the house duties. He would go market for his household and also for the neighbor and friends. He helped labourers and worked like them in the construction of the Mosque, when there was a need to dig ditch around the city of Madinah for security purpose, he was also active in executing it.

He never despised any work no matter how humble, despite his position as a Prophet of Allah and head of state. He was a mentor for every kind of work dignified person. It was reported that he said: “ no one eats better food than that which he eats out of the work of his own hand” al-Shami, p.65

In another tradition, he made it clear to his companions that every work is honorable in contrast with begging for charity. His companions also followed his example as most of them took on certain profession as a means to sustain themselves and their dependants.

He relationship between the labourer and the employee was also formalized and was in form of contract between two or more parties with rules and regulation that must respected by either party based on equality and equity: “ Muslims shall be bound by the conditions wish they made” Bukhari: *al-Ijarah*, 14. Even the master and the servant ere considered as two contracting parties in which the master is bound as much the terms of contract as the servant based on

the tradition reported by al-Bukhari where the prophet was reported to have said: “ Allah says there are three persons whose adversary in dispute I shall be on the day of resurrection: a person who makes a promise in my name and then acts unfaithfully, a person who sells a free person then devours his price and a person who employs a servant and receives fully the labour due from him, then does not pay his remuneration” Bukhari: *a-Ijarah*. 10

The employees of the state, its collectors and executives officers and judges were counted among the category of servant as they are all called nowadays civil servants. Se all entitled to correct remuneration and they must not accept gift of any kind from the public.

The Qur’an and any other knowledge are also to be remunerated: “ the most worthy of things for which you take remuneration is the book of Allah” Bukhari: *al-Ijarah*, 16. Umar was appointed once a collector by the Prophet, and when he was offered remuneration he said that he was not in need of it. The Prophet then told him to accept it and give it away as charity for those who need it if he likes to do so. Bukhari: *al-Tamanni*, 17.

So , it has become a principle and rule that each employee, servant, and every laborer is entitled to a salary.

Trading is an honourable profession, so the Prophet had some praising statements for truthful and honest traders. Companions were told to be honest in their transactions with one another, in the execution of their dealings and to be generous in their gives and takes Bukhari: *al-Tijarah*. 16. Honesty was the principle in their dealings. “ if they both speak the truth and make manifest defect/s defect if any in their dealings in transactions their transaction would be blessed, and if they conceal the defect and tell lies in it the blessing of their transaction would be removed, Bukhari: *al-Tijarah*. 19.

Speculation in the transactions of seeds and the like goods were prohibited “ whoever buys grains shall not sell it until he obtains its possession, Bukhari: *al-Muzaraah*. 54 cultivation of lands and planting of trees was encouraged, Bukhari. *al-Muzaraah*, 1. Anybody who cultivates land which is not the property of somebody has a better title to it, Bukhari: *al-Muzaraah*,. 15. Those who had large landed property and could not cultivate it were encouraged to give it to those would cultivate for free or if he so like could give to his brother in faith for a share from the produce or for a fix sum, Bukhari: *al-Muzaraah*,. 8, 11, 19. Ownership of land was recognized and also the right to sell it or give it to those that would cultivate for them. They were also advised not to give themselves totally to agriculture (Bukhari: *al-Muzaraah*, 2.

Islamic Entrepreneurship Model

Islamic entrepreneurship is a system, process and practices of conducting business in an Islamic way. Islam is a way of life and it encompasses the entire activities of Muslims to lead their life in this world in accordance with the dictate of the Quran and *sunnah*. So in theory, Islam through al-Quran and *Sunnah* provides the complete and concrete guide for the Muslims in their activities and practices related to businesses and entrepreneurship.

Following the Quran and *Sunnah* in entrepreneurship and business guarantees reward in this world and the hereafter. These practices ensure competitive capabilities in almost every aspect of life including business. This is as expounded in many verses of the Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن تَنصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ ٧

7. O you who believe! if you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet.

According to al-Sabuni, commenting on this verse, Allah has assured the believers that if they assist the religion of Allah, He would surely assist them in overcoming the challenging of this world which including overcoming their enemies at war and other problems of this world including poverty which the major challenge of man in this world.

إِن يَنصُرْكُمْ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِن يَخْذَلْكُمْ فَمَن ذَا الَّذِي يَنصُرْكُمْ مِّن بَعْدِهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ١٦٠

160. If Allah assists you, then there is none that can overcome you, and if He forsakes you, who is there then that can assist you after Him? And on Allah should the believers rely.

On the interpretation of this verse al-Sabuni posited that if Allah assist you no man harm you or overwhelm you, and if He forsakes one no power can harm you. Every thing is in the hand of Allah. So believers should rely on Allah in all of their affairs, including their business as their success and otherwise are in the hand of Allah.

فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهِدُوا ذَوِي عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ذَلِكَ يُوَعِّظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ٢ وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِن حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بُلِغَ أَمْرِهِ فَذَجَلِ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا ٣

2. So when they have reached their prescribed time, then retain them with kindness or separate them with kindness, and call to witness two men of justice from among you, and give upright testimony for Allah. With that is admonished he who believes in Allah and the latter day; and whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah, He will make for him an outlet,
3. And give him sustenance from whence he thinks not; and whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him; surely Allah attains His purpose; Allah indeed has appointed a measure for everything.

The point of evidence in the two verses is at the end of verse two and the beginning of verse three where it is stated that those who fear Allah, He would surely make them safe landing in their affairs and provide for them from where they do not expect. The story Auf Ibn Malik was cited here by al-Sabuni, when Auf's son was captured by the enemy of Islam, then he made a complaint to the Prophet the issue and the poor condition of his family. He was advised by the Prophet to fear Allah and to supplicate to Allah always by repeating: "*Laa hawla wa laa quwwata Illa billah*", he and his wife. His son was later freed and the family was also enriched by Allah.

All the teachings of these verses are revolving around the Islamic ethics of entrepreneurship which Muslim entrepreneurs should follow for success in their business. During the Islamic civilization ranging from the 10th to 15th century AD, Kayed and Hassan (2011) wrote that the Muslims then were the most successful entrepreneurs and exemplary to their peers. This phenomenon is actually the manifestation of the religious spirituality in Islam. These predominantly spiritual elements characterize the Islamic entrepreneurship model, thus setting the characteristics, approached and practices to be different from that of the conventional ways. If these elements are recognized and constantly utilized by the Muslims in the process of the entrepreneurship along all the other technical and intellectual competencies, they could be potent for competitiveness. Understanding of the Quran and *Sunnah* and having the right knowledge of what we want to do are conditions to determine the level of success for Muslims entrepreneurs and for others as well.

Yahya and Othman, (2015) insist in that the Muslim entrepreneurs must possess the technical knowledge of the business as well the religious knowledge in order to be successful. It is also evident that non-Muslims who firmly comprehend what they do and practice the teachings of the Quran, perform better in their business than others, and those who recognize that and practice the Islamic ways improves their business performance. Understanding of al-Quran and *Sunnah* is the most essential components of the Islamic entrepreneurial values.

There is no certain universal and practical way that could be claimed as the most existing among the Muslim entrepreneurs anywhere to be called conventional entrepreneurship. The Muslims have to properly develop their model through the Islamic sources and by taking into account all the contemporary environmental issues, challenges and barriers to its development.

The model need to be tightly aligned with the Muslims purpose of life and Islamic worldview and be designed or built on some principles, as proposed by Bhuiyan (1996), include the element of *iman* belief as a whole, fear of Allah SWT, seeking guidance from the holy Qur'an, Sunnah, *Ijmāc* & *Qyās*, shariah guidelines, accountability and sense of responsibility, justice for all, economy in usage not wastage, dignity of labor, division of labor and forgiveness for minor faults.

Faizal, Ridhwan and Kalsom (2013) added that the principles also to include, *taqwah* as a framework, *halal* agenda as a top priority, worship to Allah as top priority, practicing high moral values, trustworthiness and integrity, concern for welfare of all, knowledgeable, caring for society and environment.

The Islamic Business Ethics

Scholars have suggested that one of the main themes in the Islamic Entrepreneurship shall be the Islamic business ethics. Muhammad et. al (2013) proposed in their study that when a business is clear of its core purpose and values and aligns its brand, it is more likely to attract and keeps talented people, reduce inefficiency and stress caused by conflicting messages and also attract more clients, customers and also supplier who deliver goods to the same high standards. The clearer importance of business ethics will assist the business leaders to implement and practice ethical business and management.

They further stresses that Islamic business ethics are necessary for Small, Medium Enterprises (SME) industry. It is essential because it is a valuable business tool, critical for identifying and resolving questions of business conduct. They propose that the Islamic business ethics for SME industry are to be based on Trust (*Amanah*), Justice (*'Adl*), Sincerity (*Ikhlas*), Truthfulness (*Sidq*) and Benevolence (*Ihsan*). Hashi (2011) on the other hand defined the concept of Islamic business ethics as based on good characters (*akhlaq*), the origin is to come from the Qur'an and practices of the Prophet (Sunnah), and the scope and principles be based on the concept of being vicegerent (*khilafah*).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Muslims have their own value system of life based on Islam, and so do the Muslim entrepreneurs. Adopting an entrepreneurial system that is alien to their value system may not augur well to their practices as there are several areas of contradictions they have to cope with. This phenomenon may not be helpful in driving them to be as productive and competitive. They have to be clear of the purpose of their entrepreneurial venture, processes they are going through and activities they undertake such that their efforts are to be rewarded not only in the form of economic gains but also the barakah, tranquility as well the well-being of their ummah and continuous help from the God they worship that is Allah SWT. Transgressing the limits of what they can or cannot do prevent them from getting the best help from Allah SWT, whereas He is the Best of Helpers.

The proven success of the Prophet himself and some of his companions as well the Muslim entrepreneurs of the past should be exemplary to the Muslims entrepreneurs of the current and future era. When the Prophet SAW visited the business locations of his time his duty was to ensure shariah rules were implemented and enforced without any compromise.

Thus entrepreneurship is not just a business per se, but it is also a vehicle for da'wah and propagation of Islam as a complete way of life.

It is recommended that whatever role the Muslims want to play in the area of entrepreneurship, the ethics inherent in the Islamic concept of dignity of labour should be applied. The kitab and sunnah should be adhered to, and they should be careful in investing in the business that are haram no matter how lucrative it may seem to be

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