

SPIRITUALITY IN ISLAMIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP: MOTIVATION AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS IN KELANTAN

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ABSTRACT

Spirituality is a vital aspect in the context of Islamic entrepreneurship. In fact, the Malay entrepreneur's achievement that associated with their attitude as one of the influential factors in many extents, is derived from internal religious values as a final solution. However, there is little studies that scrutinizing this issue extensively in the context of the entrepreneurs success. Therefore, this research will explore spiritual aspects by identifying the related characteristics and the significance from motivational view and achievements that would lead to the success in entrepreneurship. Through an in-depth interview and thematic analysis, it can be said that the characteristics and spiritual practice do influence the motivation of entrepreneurs to build confidence and perseverance. Holding tight to the moral principles and assisting to more efficient managerial aspects and the undertakings will lead to the success in the business endeavour.

Keywords: *Islamic entrepreneurship, spirituality and successful entrepreneurs.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The element of spirituality has gained its place and become popular in western studies, for instance relating the spirituality with the workplace (Fornaciari, 2004; Kale & Shrivastava, 2003), entrepreneurship (Jackson & Konz, 2006), leadership (Fry, 2003), and religion (Saroglou & Garcia, 2008). These studies looked at the priority and the spiritual role according to the western perspective in enhancing the aspect of management and also the aspect of humanity. Such as work satisfaction, creativity, productivity and also motivation. In the Islamic context, spirituality is about the awareness of *tauhid* towards Allah SWT for someone to live according to His directions and commands (Nasr, 1987).

The concept of spirituality is closely related to Islam due to the reason that the aspects of a Muslim life depends solely to it, because the purpose of the creation of mankind is to serve Allah SWT. Therefore, in Islam there is no boundary between the aspects of material and spiritual because the belief in Allah SWT takes place in every aspect of life. The philosophy of Islamic entrepreneurship is driven by the economic philosophy where business is based on *Rabbani* or God oriented (al-Qaradhawi, 2001), and this creates the influence of the element of spirituality in entrepreneurship.

This study focuses on the benefits of spiritual aspects towards the success of entrepreneurs. The spirituality in the context of this research refers to the internal characteristics based on the devotion to Allah SWT which develops the attitudes and certain practices in the context of entrepreneurship.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Spirituality or *Kerohanian* in Malay language is defined as spiritual matters and spiritual conditions (Kamus Dewan, 2010) which derived from the word '*roh*' in Arabic among other things is referring to the internal characteristics to something breathed by Allah SWT to the human body as mentioned in *Surah al-Hijr* verse 28-29 [meaning]:

"Behold! Thy Lord said to the Angels: 'I am about to create man from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape. When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him'."

These verses explain the ultimatum of the human creation from the elements of physical (dirt) and spiritual (God's breath) which bring the human to the noble stage that relates them to Allah in fulfilling the norm of creation and the necessity of life system according to God's arrangements (Qutb, 2000). The fundamental aspect of spirituality is the piousness which is translated to the religious practice such as prayers, fasting, alms giving and performing hajj (Nasr, 1987) together with the knowledge and allegiance that are practiced in daily life according to *syara'*. Therefore, spirituality in Islam will create a complete Muslim, praying to Allah SWT and becoming a useful human to the society with the good deeds of his own (Hawwa, 2004). Spirituality also refers to the expression of *tauhid* paradigm which creates a harmonious bond between the world and the afterlife in the context of entrepreneurship (Beekun, 1997). Entrepreneurship in Islamic context is a form of *ibadah* in fulfilling the balanced needs of life from the aspects of material and *ukhrawi*. Allah SWT says in *Surah al-Qasas* verse 77 [meaning]:

"But seek, with the (wealth) which God has bestowed on thee, the Home of Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world but do thou good, as God has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for God loves not those who do mischief."

From the Islamic perspective, a Muslim entrepreneur is seen as an individual with responsibilities, fulfilling the needs of the society in order to get both benefits in this world and the hereafter (Ab Aziz, 2010). The concept of Muslim entrepreneurship stresses the integration of the spiritual elements with worldly life because Islam is ideally functioning in every aspect of life (Che Zarina & Solahudin, 2011) in fulfilling the duty as the *khalifa* in the world. Hence, Muslim entrepreneurs should not only look at entrepreneurship from materialistic perspective, without looking at the spiritual aspects (Syukri, 1999) that rooted in its motivation. Allah SWT says in *Surah al Talaq* verse 2-3 [meaning]:

”Thus when they fulfil their term appointed, either take them back on equitable terms; and take for witness two persons from among you, endowed with justice, and establish the evidence for the sake of God. Such is the admonition given to him who believes in God and the last Day. And for those who fear God, He (ever) prepares a way out. And He provides for him from (sources) he never could expect. And if anyone puts his trust in God, sufficient is (God) for him. For God will surely accomplish his purpose: verily, for all things has God appointed a due proportion.”

The verses evidently explain the correct piousness in human heart relating to the will and the planning of Allah SWT (Qutb, 2000). Piousness as a source of motivation in Islam (Zulkarnain & Isa, 2011) and the concept of motivation in Islam is seen as the will, triggered by God’s will (Khaliq, 2011), inspired by the strength or faith towards the assistance from Allah SWT in every aspect of life including entrepreneurship. The implementation of the concept of *tawakkal* increases willpower, controlling the human soul and lust so man can always be grateful, *qana’ah* in pursuing materials and always be aware of the power and planning of Allah SWT that supersede everything. Even quality and excellent performance in any business endeavours are given the emphasis by Islam (Jabnoun, 1994) through a *hadith* narrated by al-Baihaqi in al-Suyuti (2000):

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ إِذَا عَمِلَ أَحَدُكُمْ عَمَلًا أَنْ يُتَّقِيَهُ

“Surely Allah loves a person when he does a job, he is doing in earnest.” (Riwayat al-Baihaqi)

Past studies on spirituality and entrepreneurship showed that the dimensions of spirituality in entrepreneurship are Beliefs, *Ibadah*, Repents (Mohsen, 2007; Kamil 2011; and Zulkarnain & Isa, 2011) *Tawakkal*, *Qana’ah*, Sincerity, Patience, *Zikir*, *Risalah* and *Akhirat* (Zulkarnain & Isa, 2011). Study conducted by Ilhaamie and Yazilawati (2012) found that there is a significant relationship between the *taqwa* and the Islamic leadership with success or the achievements of Muslim entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship. In order to get in-depth perspective, this research intended to explore on the essential characteristics and spiritual practices as well as their importance towards the success of Muslim entrepreneurs in various sectors and industrial levels in Kelantan.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative study conducted in Kelantan on selected 10 successful entrepreneurs representing micro, small, medium and large scale industries in two main sectors; fabrications and services. Both sectors are among the popular sectors. Basic definition of entrepreneurs in this research is the person who founded and developed companies from the beginning until they have progressively expanded according to their levels. The criteria of successful entrepreneurs from the perspective of informant are based on the survival of business not less than 10 years, the increment of sales and the development of business, number of workers, reputation of the company and entrepreneurs related agencies.

Data were collected through in-depth interview based on specific protocol regarding the personal and business background, challenges and problems as well as the practice or approach that bring success to the business endeavours. The process of data collection and analysis through in-depth interview conducted involving seven steps as mentioned by Kvale (1996) including *thematizing* (required thematic scope), *designing* (questionnaires in the interview protocol and remarks) *interviewing* (the process of interview), *transcribing* (transcribing to verbatim text) *analyzing* (reading the transcribe and identifying the theme), *verifying* (concurring data credibility) and *reporting* (writing reports).

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Informant Profile

There are 10 informants in this research; 8 males and 2 females. They were classified into three age groups namely 35-44 years, 45-54 years and 55-64 years. Five of the informants (50%) are from 35-44 years group.

Profile	In1	In2	In3	In4	In5	In6	In7	In8	In9	In10
<i>Sex</i>										
Male			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Female	X	X								
<i>Age</i>										
35 - 44 years			X		X	X	X			X
45 - 54 years	X	X		X						
55 - 64 years								X	X	
<i>Education</i>										
SRP								X	X	
SPM	X	X								X
Diploma							X			
Bachelor's Degree				X	X	X				
Masters Degree			X							
<i>Industry categories</i>										
Micro	X	X								

Small				X						
Medium			X			X		X		X
Large					X		X		X	
<i>Types/Sectors</i>										
Factory/Fabrication	X	X	X	X				X		
Service					X	X	X		X	X
<i>Experience</i>										
10 – 15 years	X	X	X		X					X
16 – 20 years				X		X	X		X	
> 45 years								X		
<i>No. of employees</i>										
5	X	X								
20 - 50			X	X	X					X
51 - 70						X		X		
200 – 250							X		X	

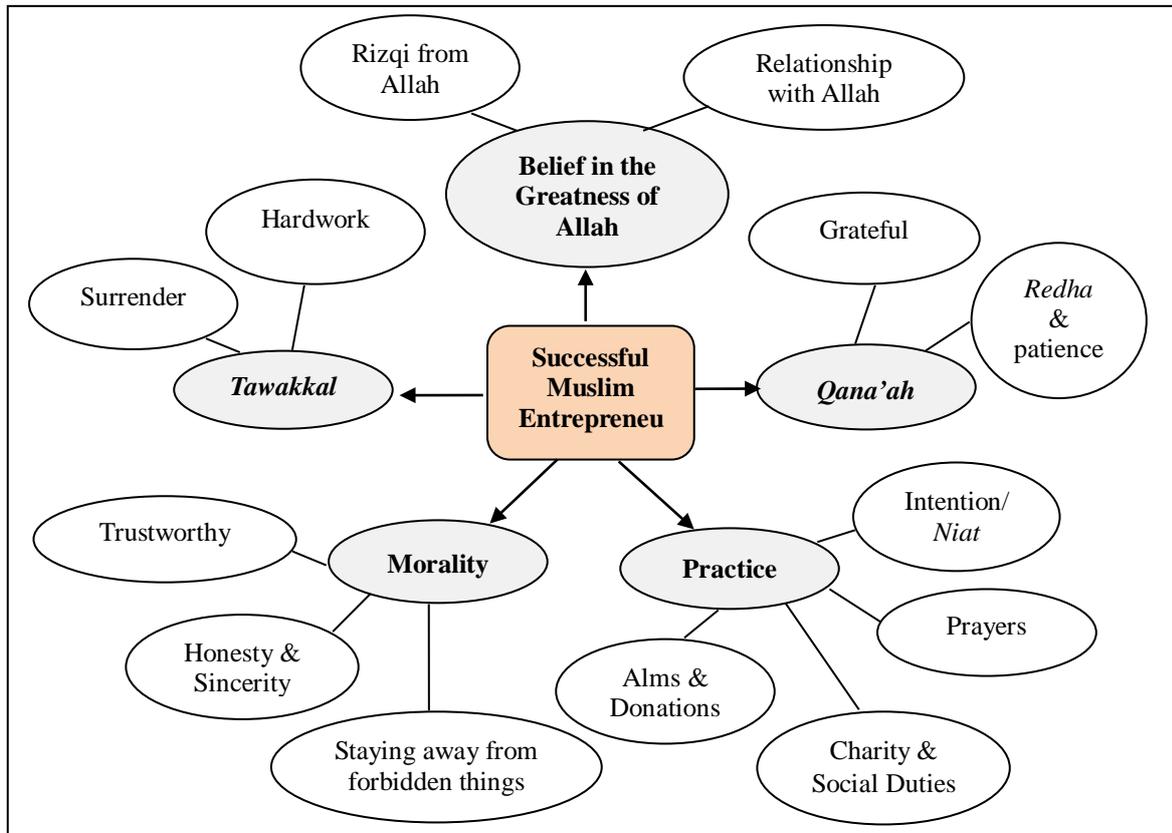
4.2 Characteristics and Spirituality Practices

Based on the in-depth interview and the thematic analysis, it was found that there are five main themes related to the characteristics and spirituality practice among the successful businessmen; *Believing the Greatness of Allah, Tawakkal, Morality, Practice and Qana’ah*. Each theme is then divided into few sub themes which will give clearer pictures on the level of spiritual characteristics from the perspective of the informants.

Under the theme of believing the greatness of Allah SWT, there are two sub themes, believe that *rizqi* is the blessings of Him and this will bring to the importance of the context of relationship between a servant and his God. The concept of *tawakkal* is portrayed in two sub themes which are to give our best in our efforts and to surrender everything to Allah SWT. Morality refers to three sub themes; completing the obligations especially in the scope of entrepreneurship, honesty and sincerity in conducting transactions and to stay away from things that are forbidden in the religion.

Apart from that, the theme of practice in the scope of *fardhu ain* and *kifayah* refers to some sub themes which are to have a proper intention in conducting business, prayers which reflect the relationship with Allah SWT, paying alms and donating as to complete the social responsibility or in charity matters. The final theme, which is *qana’ah* are divided into two sub themes which are to be grateful and be enough with what they have and *redha* towards the fate of Allah SWT. Diagram 1 shows the position of themes and sub themes as the characteristics and the spirituality practice of successful entrepreneurs in this study.

Diagram 1: Characteristics and the Practice of Spirituality of Entrepreneurship



4.3 The Significance of Characteristics and Spirituality Practice towards the Achievement of the Entrepreneurs

Themes of the spirituality characteristics as shown in Diagram 1 are influencing the motivational aspect (*spirituality awareness*) and achievement (*morality/practice*) which will assist the accomplishment and success of the informants in business.

i. Motivation

The informants have a very high level of faith on earnings as a blessing from Allah SWT which will create a strong bond in the context of a servant to The Creator. This is a strong foundation in building the attitude and entrepreneur's motivation due to the reason that informants believe and understand that every gift and decision is solely coming from God after all efforts have already been done. The *iman* seems to help psychologically to those who are facing challenges and problems in business world as portrayed in the captions below.

"There are always problems...sometimes, we just ignore them. Competitions are defined as your own earnings. It is God that decides about your rizqi. The most important thing is we must put in our effort." (In1)

"Rizqi is the blessing given by Allah SWT. It is our own rizqi. This is due to the reason that when Allah wants to award something to an individual, there is no power or other human being that can stop this, and it is the same when Allah SWT wants to withdraw the given blessings, there is also no human nor power that can stop this from happening. That is my principle." (In9)

The faith mentioned above creates the strength and motivation to the informants based on the concept of *tawakkal* which not only to work and to surrender their fate to Allah SWT, but also to demonstrate independency and the etiquette of the informants in business. For instance, this can be seen in the Informant 5's statement below:

"It is just that I am tawakkal that bring our advantage. Tawakkal is the most important thing in business. If we are always depending to the inside man in doing business, other people help our business, bribery or anything, we better don't, do not ever be dependent on others. If it is ours then it is ours. If we are in contracts negotiation, whether we get the contracts or not, it is ok." (In5)

The attitude emerges from the spirituality is crucial to make the informants determined and persevered. They accept their fates, obstacles and the ups and downs in the business world and they are not easily broken. Through their endeavour and efforts, they achieve success. Sharing the experience of Informant 4:

"at that time...I had nothing left, all were problematic, deceived, all my partners were problematic. But I managed to rise and Alhamdulillah, from only one factory I already have two. This is due to the blessings and rizqi given by Allah SWT because we accept what is given by God, we must have tawakkal, do not ever complaint on the things given by God, as I was saying, we must accept whatever is decided upon us. After all the bad experiences, I actually obtained more than before, it was enough back then and it is plentiful nowadays." (In4)

Motivation from the spirituality awareness is crucial in building the attitude of excellent businessmen based on the belief (*spiritual*), and this also influences the achievement through the implementation on their morality and practice to succeed in the context of Muslim entrepreneurship. The response of Informant 5 provides an insight:

"...at first, the power switch between us and Allah, we have to switch it on. Then God will show the way to us. Based on my experience, when there are problems, there are solutions. That is the most important thing, knowledge in business is vital but if you are committed towards Allah SWT, He will help you. That is the only formula."(In5)

ii. *Achievements*

The study proves that morality and practice in the context of Muslim entrepreneurship is crucial towards the survival and the development of their business. Morality which is based on the spiritual awareness leads to the value of *barakah* when doing their business. For instance, honesty and sincerity can control the quality of products, merchant's etiquette and also the reputation of the companies. In2 and In6 mentioned that:

“we must be honest in anything, then it will have barakah. If we want to cheat a little while weighing things, people would never notice us, wouldn't they? But we can't do that. Be clean while doing work, for instance we are preparing our own food, that is also how we are going to prepare others food for sale.”(In2)

“Put up a reasonable price, which would not burden the buyers, do not cheat people, be aware with our honesty with customers, is the item sold usable or not? If it is not usable, then we should change it. From profit point of view, we refuse to change the broken item by saying it can still be used that is just a white lie. Taking this illegal money is bad. People will judge us. We can say that no matter how they persuade us, we can lie to them, but is the money comes in the right way?”(In6)

Meanwhile, among other practices associated with the informants are giving alms and donations. Apart from what this research had found like the obligation to pay alms, donating is also a must to the informants depending to their limitation and approaches. In this matter, the informants realize the role of alms and donations in giving the blessing to their business as mentioned by Informant 5:

“Donations, the less business I get, the more I donate, and Alhamdulillah, rizqi comes. When having less business, we should donate more so that our rizqi will increase. God is like that. We must have faith. I never miss my chances to donate...” (In5)

It is also an inspiration or benchmark for the informants to keep striving to develop their business to a better level. Informant 4 shared his experience:

“every day, I ask from God, to bless me with lots of rizqi, I want to help the poor and needy, the orphans, having a dream to build a mosque, I have donated a lot but if possible I want to see my donation, not to boast myself but at least I would feel satisfied after spending 19 years in business. I have it but it is not enough for me...”(In4).

Hence, this research looks at the balance between the achievement in business with the charity practiced by the informants in looking for *barakah* in business and fulfilling their responsibilities towards the society. This is shared by the informants In10 and In3 as

follows:

“I took same tahfiz students, and I supported them until they graduated. I had also helped the poor every month. Our money cannot always be with us. When we give, God will give us back, it is always like that. It is quite hard to explain but I have been through a lot.”(In10)

“These are among the satisfaction I have because if we do not convey others about this, God will not give us new things. Knowledge must be conveyed like the dakwah by the tablighs. We give others what we have, then God will give us the new one. Sometimes, we might think that this will create competitors but it is actually not like that.”(In3)

5.0 CONCLUSION

This research shows that the aspect of spirituality plays an important role towards motivation and the achievement of the Muslim entrepreneurs. This research had also found that the successful entrepreneurs share the same characteristics of the spirituality even though they are in the different fields and categories. Spirituality which closely related to the internal elements based on faith towards Allah SWT creates positive attitudes and acts upon their actions in the practice of entrepreneurship. The themes and sub themes related to the characteristics of the spirituality practice influence the motivation of the entrepreneurs in building their confidence and self perseverance, upholding the principle of morality and assisting responsible management which would bring success in their endeavours.

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