

Entrepreneurs' Personality from Islamic Perspective: A Study of Successful Muslim Entrepreneurs in Malaysia

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Abstract. The success of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and his companions in entrepreneurship which has gained great material success is due to their personalities. This is because they are well known for their good personalities. Thus, their customers are very confident to do business deals with them without having any single doubts. Therefore, this study will be focusing on the relationship between Muslim entrepreneurs' personalities with their achievements. About 183 successful Muslim entrepreneurs participated in this study. By using Pearson's Correlation test, the study found a significant relationships between Muslim entrepreneurs' personalities with their achievements.

Keywords: Muslim entrepreneur, Leadership, Personality, Success factor, Achievement.

1. Introduction

One of the key attributes of a successful entrepreneur is having a great personality. According to Azlina Abu Bakar (2009), the word personality comes from a Latin word 'persona' which refers to someone's exterior characteristics including their way of thinking, behavior and emotions. Thus, according to Eysenck H.J. (1970), personality from the aspect of way of thinking proves that a person has the stability in their cognitive system. Meanwhile, Abdul Aziz (2009) explains personality from behavioral aspects shows that someone will have some sort of defense mechanism within his body system. On the other hand, Miftah Muhammad Abdul Aziz (1997) suggests that personality from the aspect of emotional strength is related to one's emotional stability.

The personality of an individual differs from one another due to many factors such as physiological, environmental, educational, cultural and family backgrounds. Meanwhile, according to Mohd. Fadzillah Kamsah and Muhammad Zakaria (2008), an entrepreneur's personality from Islamic perspective refers to the personality of a Muslim entrepreneur which influences his/her actions and his/her way of reacting to problems which are based on Islamic values. This involves the tendency, ambitions, intuition to do mentally, emotionally and physically preparation in order to determine one's behavior when interacting with his/her environment. The Islamic values uphold by Muslim entrepreneur will allow him/her to possess a high level of 'taqwa' (God consciousness) for Allah SWT and Islamic leadership. Thus, the characteristic which differentiates a Muslim entrepreneur and a non-Muslim entrepreneur is the personality that is based on Islamic values in thinking, behavior and emotion, while non-Muslim entrepreneurs solely focus on their mental, emotional and physical strength.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

Entrepreneurship is one of the many aspects in life which was discussed in the Al-Quran. There are evidences in the Quran which point out the importance of gaining wealth through entrepreneurship. Allah SWT has stated in the Quran: "And We have certainly established you upon the earth and made for you therein ways of livelihood. Little are you grateful." (Surah Al-A'raf: 10)

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It has also being mentioned in the Quran: “And out of His mercy He made for you the night and the day that you may rest therein and [by day] seek from His bounty and [that] perhaps you will be grateful.” (Surah Al-Qasas: 73)

Both of these decrees from Allah SWT are evidences or reminders which call the mankind to work hard and search for benefits from all sources provided by Allah SWT in this world. Entrepreneurship is an example of this and at the same time is an ‘*ibadah*’ (religious ritual) to Allah SWT if they are carried out honestly and for the right reason. In the context of being successful in this particular field, a Muslim entrepreneur has to possess an Islamic-based personality. This is what distinguished Muslim entrepreneurs from non-Muslim entrepreneurs. Some examples of personality of Muslim entrepreneurs are as follows:

2.1. ‘Taqwa’ (God Consciousness / Fear & Love of Allah SWT)

In order to be successful Muslim entrepreneurs from Islamic perspective, Muslim entrepreneurs must have faith and ‘*taqwa*’ to Allah SWT. As according to the decree of Allah in the Quran: “O you who have believed, shall I guide you to a transaction that will save you from a painful punishment? [It is that] you believe in Allah and His Messenger and strive in the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you, if you should know.” (Surah Al-Sof: 10-11)

Through this decree, an entrepreneur must believe in Allah and strive in the search of wealth to improve himself and do all of Allah and the Prophet’s teachings. According to Mohammad Sahar bin Mat Din (2007), the real success for an entrepreneur is when he has faith and ‘*taqwa*’ to Allah which means a total recumbence and by then he will be able to taste the sweetness and greatness of ‘*iman*’ or faith through gaining lots of profit from the business. As a successful entrepreneur, Mohammad Sahar has written some characteristics of religious Muslim entrepreneurs which are:

- Referring to Al-Quran as daily basis
- Performing prayer 5 times a day
- Performing ‘*zakat*’ (tithe)
- Donating to the poor and those in need
- Performing night and morning (dhuha) prayers
- Performing gratitude prayers

Thus, *Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between personality of being conscious of Allah SWT (taqwa) and achievement in business*

2.2. Possessing Islamic Leadership Skills

According to Dewan Dictionary (2007:1208), a leader means someone who leads. It is originated from the word ‘lead’ which literally means guide, show and push. According to Habibah Alias and Noran Fauziah Yaakob (2002), leader is defined as a process whereby an individual uses all his strength and thinking skills and potential to the fullest. Leadership also involves the aspect of ability, capability, intelligent to control and adapt in any situation. Those with leadership skills are said to be able to avoid inappropriate elements which can affect them. They are said to be able to react professionally in any situations. Whenever facing a problem, they will find a way. Whenever they see a dead-end, they will be quick on their feet. They always ask whenever they do not understand or do not know something. They are also able to aspire and convince themselves without getting any motivation from others and they can cheer themselves up. With these qualities, it is possible to achieve any goals because those leaders are really in control of themselves without facing any other elements that can threaten their powers.

Same with Sheikh Abdul Munir bin Sheikh Abdul Rahim (2008), leaders are those who are able to lead themselves and other individuals and are able to interact with an individual or groups. Abdullah Hassan and Aion Mohd. (2005) discusses the main role of a leader i.e. to move mankind and the organization under his leadership forward by increasing their efficiency and improving teamwork among the staffs in the organization. A leader must build teamwork among his workers and integrate the individual’s interests with the organization’s interests. Idris Zakaria (1996) states that the characteristics of a great leader are wise, strong, and intelligent, has a strong memory, knowledgeable, very experienced, modest, honest, prudent, just

and has a strong will. These attributes are knowledge and skills which can be acquired, trained and improved over time.

From Islamic perspective, all Muslim individuals are leaders. Even though they may not be a leader to other individuals or any organizations, they are their own leaders and are responsible to lead their own selves. Those who cannot lead themselves are not able to lead others. As said by Allah SWT in the Holy Quran: "And (mention, O Muhammad), when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:30) Then, He said: "...Perhaps your Lord will destroy your enemy and grant you succession in the land and see how you will do." (Surah Al-A'raaf 7:129)

Meanwhile, the key characteristic of leaders according to Islamic perspective which all Muslim entrepreneurs must have is a close relationship with their subordinates. This is very crucial in order to build confidence and trust among the workers. They should also be someone with dignity, self-esteem, and good moral values. However, they must also be very strict in doing their work and responsibilities, always communicate, give speeches, suggestions and orders. Besides that, they should also provide some good ideas, knowledge and skills for their staffs.

In addition, according to Abdul Aziz Yusof (2010), a leader in the context of entrepreneurship must have the knowledge and the skills. This is because lots of changes had happened in many fields recently whereby the entrepreneurs need to share their knowledge and skills to others. Besides that, these leaders should also be able to do some quick thinking in making decisions especially regarding the problems related to the current issues. Entrepreneurs who become leaders must show good examples to their undertakings. As Allah says in the Quran: "Do you order righteousness of the people and forget yourselves while you recite the Scripture?" (Surah Al-Baqarah: 44)

Islam calls upon Muslim entrepreneurs to set some good examples to their employees. This is because without a good example by their leader, the employees will fail. An entrepreneur must lead with honesty and trust. Allah SWT has mentioned in the Quran: "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice." (Surah an-Nisa':58)

Muslim entrepreneurs who are very honest will be very responsible and trustable in all of their dealings because they know Allah has forbade his servants to betray the trust given to them. According to the Quran: "O you, who have believed, do not betray Allah and the Messenger or betray your trusts while you know [the consequence]." (Surah al-Anfal: 27)

A Muslim entrepreneur must carry out his responsibilities as best as possible so that he will not be regarded as '*munafik*' (hypocrites). He has to protect and observe his religion even though he is struggling through lots of predicaments. It is compulsory for a Muslim entrepreneur to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong among his workers, customers and the society as a whole. As according to Allah in the Quran: "You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah." (Surah al-Imran: 110)

Thus, Muslim entrepreneurs have a big responsibility to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong for the betterment of '*ummah*' (nation). Hence, *Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the personality of Islamic leadership and achievement in business*

3. Methodology

A field study was conducted on 250 successful Muslim entrepreneurs in Malaysia by using systematic random sampling. The list was obtained from the Companies Commission of Malaysia (ROC) for a sum of fee. An entrepreneur is considered successful if he has some characteristics of successful business which are sustainability of business for more than five years, a big number of staffs, having fixed assets and net assets and increased share capital.

Meanwhile, achievement in business which is the dependent variable in this study includes revenue gained from managing the businesses, assets ownership, growth of savings, market growth, increased profitability and increased sales. The Cronbach alpha value of these six items is 0.9. This means that the question is highly reliable.

On the other hand, the independent variable in this hypothesis is the personality of the entrepreneur from Islamic perspective. The personality on entrepreneurs from Islamic perspective is related to ‘*taqwa*’ for Allah SWT and possessing Islamic leadership. The Cronbach alpha value for these 2 items is 0.89. This shows that this question is highly reliable. The questionnaire requires the entrepreneurs to answer according to a five point scale. Each scale refers to respondent's answers of being "Strongly Disagree" (value 1) to “Strongly Agree” (value 5).

To determine the degree of relationship between the types of personality from Islamic perspective with Muslim entrepreneurs’ achievements in Malaysia, Pearson correlation test was conducted. The correlation value can indicate the direction and strength of the relationships. Correlation value that approaches 1.0 indicates there is a very high positive correlation, while a value between 0.1 to 0.3 indicates that there is a positive, but weak correlation. Positive correlation coefficients indicate that there is a direct relationship between independent and dependent variables. However, if the correlation coefficients show a negative value, then the relationship between the dependent and independent variables are known as inverting relationship.

4. Findings

Respondents in this study consisted of 130 males and 53 females. Thus, the rate of response is 73.2% which is good. Most successful entrepreneurs are those aged 30 years – they make up 80% of the study. At least 12% holds a diploma, 43% possesses a Degree, and those with Master or PhD are at 16%. A total of 78% started their business with a capital of below RM100,000, 19% opened their business with a capital of RM100,000 to RM500,000 and the rest started their business capital above RM500,000. 60% of successful Muslim entrepreneurs are able to earn less than RM50,000 month while 40% managed to make over RM50,000 per month. 40% of the respondents hold a degree in Islamic education, 21% completed secondary schools while 18% studied Islam in primary school. The findings of the relationships between the personalities of entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial achievements are as follows:

4.1. Hypothesis 1

There is a relationship between the personality of ‘*taqwa*’ to Allah SWT and the achievement of successful Muslim entrepreneurs in Malaysia

Table 1: Relationship between the personality of *taqwa*’ to Allah SWT and the achievement of successful Muslim entrepreneurs in Malaysia

<i>‘Taqwa’</i>	Entrepreneurs achievement
	Correlations .319**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

For the first hypothesis analysis (Table 1), the coefficient value given is 0.319. This indicates that the variables of the personality of ‘*taqwa*’ and the achievement of successful Muslim entrepreneurs had a positive but weak relationship. The hypothesis is accepted because of the significant relationship between the two variables. Therefore, this hypothesis proved that those who have ‘*taqwa*’ to Allah SWT are highly successful Muslim entrepreneurs. According to Hidayah Abdul Karim, these people always make sure they perform their prayers five times a day, always perform ‘*qiamulail*’ or middle night prayers, fast, perform morning prayers or ‘*sholat dhuha*’, always keep their promises, always be patient, always aware of their sins and repent immediately, surrender themselves to Allah’s greatness, forgiving and humble.

4.2. Hypothesis 2

There is a relationship between the personality of Islamic leadership and the achievement of successful Muslim entrepreneurs in Malaysia

Based on the analysis of the second hypothesis (Table 2), the coefficient value given is 0.394. This shows that the variables have a weak but positive relationship. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted because of the significant relationship between the two variables. According to Sheikh Abdul Munir bin Sheikh Abdul Rahim (2008), a Muslim entrepreneur has to possess leadership skills to build confidence of others towards

him/her. He/She has to be someone with dignity, responsible, honest, knowledgeable and wise and knows how to command his/her subordinates.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are significant relationships between the personalities of God consciousness and possessing Islamic leadership skills of successful Muslim entrepreneurs and their accomplishments. Thus, this proves that all hypotheses proposed in this study can be accepted. This is because the personality of Muslim entrepreneurs is an important asset to obtain high achievement in the field of entrepreneurship. Having Islamic personality could cause someone to be closely related to Allah and also other people. The relationship with Allah is based on the concept of ‘*taqwa*’ which relates entrepreneurs with total recumbence to Allah and to have good relationship with other people. Besides that, an entrepreneur must possess Islamic leadership skills to lead others. This will provide some satisfaction and comfort to those who deal with these entrepreneurs. Generally, it can be concluded that the personality of entrepreneurs studied in this research is a dynamic foundation for individual relationships between the entrepreneurs with both Allah and other people such as employees, customers, suppliers, retailers and wholesalers.

6. Acknowledgement

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Table 2: Relationship between the personality of Islamic leadership and the achievement of successful Muslim entrepreneurs in Malaysia

Islamic Leadership	Entrepreneurs’ Achievement
	Correlation .394**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).