THE INFLUENCE OF QUR'ANIC ETHICS ON RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, responsible and accountable business researchers are highly sought after in the wake of Fourth Industrial Revolution due to deficit of trust and sustainability in the market. The automated and artificial intelligence driven connectedness and networking in the business world has serious deficiency in terms of trust, integrity, ethical and sustainable. The influence of Qur'anic ethics from Surah al-Mulk manifested a few ethical conducts necessary for business researchers in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The study explored what are the factors influencing business researchers to have ethical conduct and responsible in all research projects. The study interviewed 10 technopreneurs in Malaysia to solicit their views on the factors influencing business researchers to behave ethically in conducting research. The feedback from the informants suggested three ethical factors namely the reason for existence into the strategic direction and purpose of enterprises, being vigilant in investment for any venture, and being consistent with character (khuluq) manifest the Qur'anic lessons from Surah al-Mulk for being ethical in conducting research so that the results of the research contribute to the performance of companies on sustainable manner.

Keywords: Business researchers, Qur'an, Business Ethics.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, responsibility research in business has been included in the discussion of sustainability. This subject is essential for creating and sustaining competitive advantage. Without the responsible research, organizational sustainability will lead to deficiency and ineffectiveness. The presence of value system is necessary for the sustainability of performance. While human value system is within the practicing terms, Qur'anic driven ethics allows for human value system.

The influence of human value is within the wisdom and language of human. The outcome of the value is to serve the best interest of human within the large human society. When research is conducted on responsible manner, it is followed by documentation, procedure and process to reinforce the good practice. In this regards, the Quranic ethics reinforces for spiritual driven ethics, which is within the soul and mind of human.

There have been issues related to Quranic ethics, notably due to religiosity content of the ethics coupled with the value and wisdom systems. Human rationalism triggers outcomes of actions within the consequences of human terms and wisdom. As for Qur'anic terms, it is within the Divine system that reinforces human role as servants and vicegerents of Allah.

This study argues that Qur'anic ethics as some strong influence having responsible research for sustainable performance of organizations. This argument led to the primary objective of this study to explore on the influence of Qur'anic ethics on making responsible research so that it will enable for sustainable performance, not just profitability, but responsibility and accountability sense.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section postulates the influence of Qur'anic ethics on responsible research for sustainable performance. Responsible research has a few features and components for understanding and application. As for the influence of Qur'anic ethics, it has a few ethical principles have been the practice of many organizations.

Responsible research

Research offers new insights, knowledge, and ideas to the existing practice. The newness in doing things, processes, and means enables for continuity of activities and businesses. Likewise, the outcomes of the activities should bring benefit to humanity. In doing so, all research should take responsibility for any consequences. Figure 1 illustrates the offer of responsible research to the humanity. The illustration in Figure 1 is to explain that research has two components, namely insights and knowledge, to result in practical solutions and practices into the reality.
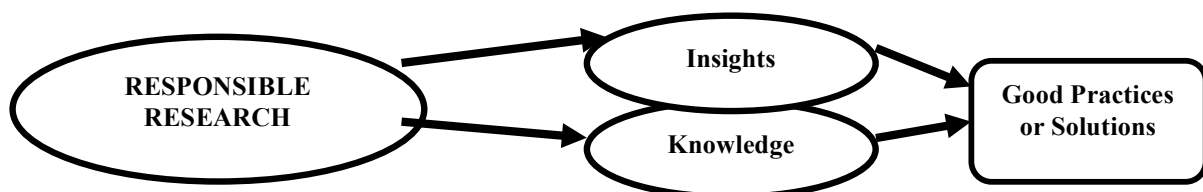

Figure 1. Components of Responsible Research.

Responsibility is always related to decisions and actions. Whoever initiates, implements and executes decisions into actions will be held responsible for the outcome of the actions. The degree of punishment, penalty and responsibility is accordance to the outcome of the actions, whether to humanity, environment and others. Figure 2 summarises key components of responsibility of research. As shown in Figure 2, responsibility results in beneficial outcomes that are mediated and moderated by decisions and actions.
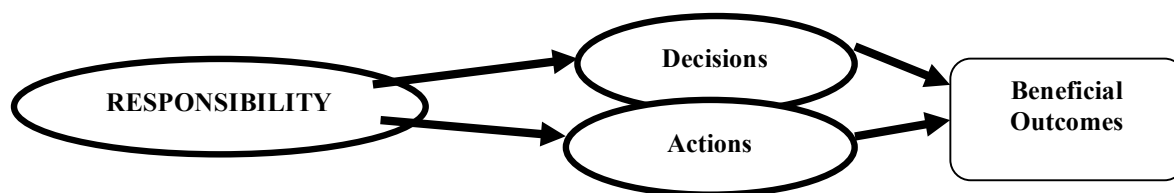

Figure 2. Key components of responsibility.

Responsible research requires research stakeholders to bear the outcomes of decisions and actions of the research whether in the forms of publications, prototypes, ideas, insights and so forth. Researchers are accountable to the research ideas, processes, and outcomes. Likewise, the stakeholders are equally responsible too, namely funders, enumerators, associates, users, media group, publication houses, and research registrars. Figure 3 summarises some stakeholders of research.
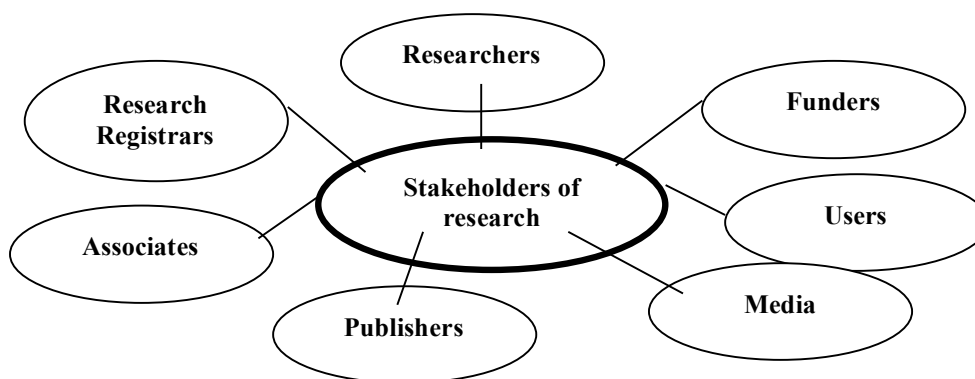

Figure 3. Some stakeholders of research

Responsible research begins from the idea stage when any situation or event triggers curiosity or gap between the questions for solution, answer and insights. There are many possible answers, solutions and insights to the research gap or curiosity. In the mean time, the decision to resume for the research needs a screening to ascertain the need to proceed for the research. Indeed, in each research, it requires investment of money, time, and effort of people and institutions. In return, each research should yield reasonable return on investment for money, time and effort that already invested. If no return, but just sunk cost, it will be a waste to the resources.

In the contexts of humanity, the outcomes of research are supposed to be beneficial to the humanity in terms of wealth, wellness, and well-being. If none of these terms able to produce, then it will be disadvantaged to the humanity. Every effort made by one group of human should be a good return to the other groups of human.

In the contexts of business, research is necessary to provide newness and improvement in products, processes, and outcomes so that businesses will continue to exist and compete with rivals on long term basis. Without research, it means no newness, then there will be no appealing point or attraction.

Ethical principles from *Surah al-Mulk*
Qur'anic ethical principles are dedicated to human as working agents to manifest and practice ethics into working example, living example and role model to human society. According to Islahi (1994), there are a few ethical principles could be learnt from Surah al-Mulk. Firstly, every action begins with purpose. The purpose must be beneficial for humanity. Therefore, it is essential to make the right choice. Wrong choices will lead to punishment in the world as well as in the Hereafter.

Secondly, in making choices, one has to be vigilant and always sought verification from reliable, authentic and authorized sources. More importantly, one has to understand the consequences of the choices one decided. Thirdly, every decision and action is accompanied with accountability which requires answers in the Hereafter. Fourthly, in assuring one made right and ethical decision and action, one should always ask for guidance from Allah.

Indeed, Surah al-Mulk is in Chapter 67, section 29, and contains 30 verses. Al-Islam (2009) argued on the surah begins with the emphasis of bountiful (*tabarak*) or blessings from Allah. It manifests the absolute sovereignty and ownership of Allah. Then, it directs to the purpose of human creation to please Allah although human will go into trial. Thus, everyone must do good deeds.

The good deeds are essential to complete the system of the creation which is based on mercy. Therefore, human must assure good deeds are done. Man must exercise attentiveness and precision, not assure systematic and avoid flawlessness.

Character building is the primary concern of ethics of Islamic principles. Rahim (2013) argued that ethics from Qur'anic analysis is about character building (*khuluq*). It has virtue and wisdom behind good character. Ilyas (2018) argued as *khuluq*, character with wisdom. Choudhury (2001) contended virtue ethics has wisdom to it which requires continuous practice of ethics. Huda et al (2017) argued as ethics is part of learning process. Therefore, as learning to Ahmad et al (2013) contended as working ethics.

Integrating Ethics to Strategy
The integration of strategy with value system enables cross functional decisions and actions to produce sustainable performance. Ahmad and Kadir (2013) argued that in the contexts of social development, the integration of value system into business and entrepreneurial activities has sustainable effects on the performance of the enterprises. This situation is related to the intrinsic aspect of enterprises that requires value system to integrate the key elements of purpose, people and structure of enterprise (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Campbell, 2007; Dickson, 2000).

According to Carroll & Shabana (2010), value system manifests social responsibility of organizations. The key elements in organization which comprises purpose, people and structure are not spared from the societal influence, at least the element of people. Likewise, Campbell (2007) contended that corporations would need to behave socially responsible due to the regulatory, institutional and social elements in the establishment of corporations.

Regulation is an outcome of society to protect the interest of the public which includes basic need, human right, welfare, wellness and wellbeing of people. As an institution regulated by the rules of law, it has mandatory duty on economic, legal and social responsibility. Dickson (2000) emphasized on cultivating the value system in individual member of society before integrating it to belief, knowledge and attitude required to be socially responsible people and businesses.

Djamdjuri (2016) argued that strong adjectives and adjectival phrases in Surah al-Mulk signifies the Divine message to human beings to do good deeds. Ethics is a matter of reflection (DuBois, 2004). Hammann et al (2009) argued on the long term value creation.

In a regulated environment that is driven by value system, it provides stimulating environment for innovation with responsibility. Weber (2018) argued that sustainability. Rahim (2013) argued on character building. Moffatt (2011) emphasized on responsible authorship and research. Martinuzzi et al (2018) contended on long term gains for being responsible in research. McGinn & Bosacki (2004) pointed to the practicing ethics.

Sustainable Performance
Sustainability allows for continuity and perpetual progress of goodness. There are two important aspects in sustainability, namely sustain and ability. Sustain requires knowledge, effort, sacrifices and activities to make goodness continuous to benefit the society and humanity (Ladkin, 2018; Miska & Mendenhall, 2018). In terms of performance, it has two types, namely financial and strategic performance. Performance is related to bottom line of organizations (Lerner et al, 2018; Ladkin, 2018). .

Thus, this study postulates the influence of Qur'anic ethics on responsible research for sustainable performance. Figure 4 shows the influence of Quranic ethics on responsible research for sustainable performance.
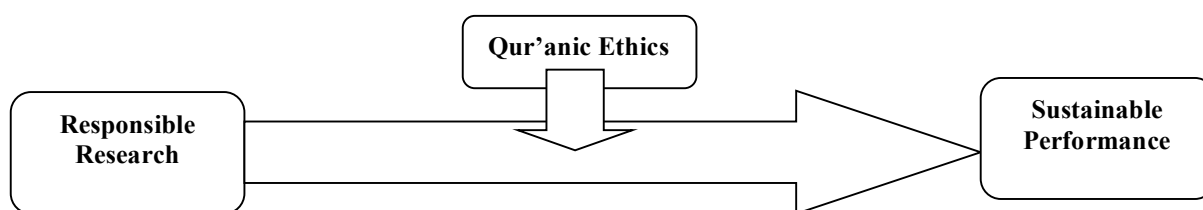
METHODOLOGY
This study aims to examine the influence of Qur'anic ethics on character building of researchers, to investigate the factors influencing responsible researchers, and to explore the influence of Qur'anic ethics on responsible research for sustainable performance. Specifically, the study explored what are Qur'anic factors influencing business researchers to have ethical conduct and responsible in all research projects. Since the nature of the study is to understand the context or the situation, then the results of the study are not to be generalized (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015).

The study used qualitative research through personal interview method with 10 technopreneurs in Malaysia to solicit their views on the factors influencing business researchers to behave ethically in conducting research. The selection of the entrepreneurs was based on purposive basis when these ten technopreneurs attended entrepreneurship workshop for three days. The purposive sampling is more specific to the target instead of convenient sampling (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015).

Prior to the interview, the study has conducted pilot study to ensure the research design, interview questions and analysis are reliable, valid and consistent (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Three experts have been approached to validate the interview questions together with the interview protocol. This study incorporated all the feedback and suggestion from the experts. With the revised interview questions and the protocol, the study conducted the interview with the informants who were within the

contexts of personal interview. The informants were approached for informed consent prior to actual interview. Each interview was spent between 20 to 30 minutes.

The interview used note taking approach as the informants were not consented for audio or video recording. Each interview note was transcribed into readable text so that easy for informants to verify the interview transcripts. The verification from the informants is very crucial to assure the accuracy of the feedback. The next step was validation of interview results by independent researchers among academics and practitioners.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the personal interview with 10 technopreneurs pertaining to the influence of Qur'anic ethics on responsible research for sustainable performance of technoprises.

Firstly, the influence is related to the reason for existence, strategic direction and purpose of enterprises. Techno1 said:

> *"Research in our business is about having research and development. It is like our bread and butter. You have to do it to make your business relevant. We spent some money on our R&D and we expect the investment of our R&D will result in our return on investment."*

Techno2 mentioned:

> *"The most important factor to make our research becomes responsible is it gives good outcome for our company and the society. We offer good products is already good for the society. When we obtained good profit, it is good for us and the society too because we will pay taxes."*

Techno3 said

> *"In many situation, we prefer to do our research according to the need of our business. For us, doing research is depending on our situation. We could not fix certain amount for research as it is going hand in hand with our business."*

Techno4 said:

> *"Nobody wants to spend on R&D without having good return. It is responsible research for us as we are entrusted by our investors and shareholders to make good research so that is will yield more profit. I think that is responsible research."*

Techno5 mentioned:

> *"We need good research output and those researchers need recognition and merit for their workplace purpose."*

Secondly, the investment on research is related to responsible research. In fact, Techno 1, Techno 2, Techno 3 and Techno 4 have pointed on that good research always gives good return of investment from research. The same interview results from Techno 5, Techno 6, Techo 7, and Techno 8.

Techno 6 said:

> *"We spent some money on our R&D and we expect the investment of our R&D will result in our return on investment. Nobody wants to spend on R&D without having good return."*

Techno7 mentioned:

> *"I think it is natural for us to be responsible in our deed. Whether we are religious or not, in business, our main outcome will tell us how responsible we are to our business."*

Techno 8 uttered:

> *"Outcome-based research is responsible research in our approach. In Islam too, we are taught to be focus or khusyuk before we are granted with success."*

Thirdly, Quranic influence is related to character building. While Techno 1 refers to trust as basis for character building, Techno 2 refers to being responsible as reinforcing force for character building. Techno1 said:

> *"It is responsible research for us as we are entrusted by our investors and shareholders to make good research so that is will yield more profit. I think that is responsible research."*

In a different tone, Techno2 mentioned:

> *"The most important factor to make our research becomes responsible is it gives good outcome for our company and the society. We offer good products is already good for the society. When we obtained good profit, it is good for us and the society too because we will pay taxes. I think it is natural for us to be responsible in our deed. Whether we are religious or not, in business, our main outcome will tell us how responsible we are to our business."*

Likewise, character building referred by Techno3 as good research agenda. Techno3 said

> *"In many situation, we prefer to do our research according to the need of our business. For us, doing research is depending on our situation. We could not fix certain amount for research as it is going hand in hand with our business. Sometimes we subcontracted our research projects to freelancers or university researchers. We need good research output and those researchers need recognition and merit for their workplace purpose."*

As for Techno4, specificity is essential. Techno 4 said:

"Responsible research for us is doing research with specific direction for specific outcomes. If without specific direction and outcome, the research will have no focus on its objectives. Outcome-based research is responsible research in our approach. In Islam too, we are taught to be focus or khusyuk before we are granted with success."

DISCUSSION

This study was to explore the Qur'anic factors influencing business researchers to have ethical conduct and responsible in all research projects. From the interview results of 10 technopreneurs argued on three factors of Qur'anic perspective influencing responsible research for sustainable performance.

Firstly, the influence is related to the reason for existence, strategic direction and purpose of enterprises. According to Carroll & Shabana (2010), the reason for existence, strategic direction and purpose of enterprises is related to value system for social responsibility of organizations. Social responsibility in Ilyas (2018)'s terms as *khuluq*, character with wisdom. As for Choudhury (2001), it is virtue ethics that has continuous practice of ethics. Huda et al (2017) argued as ethics is part of learning process. Therefore, as learning to Ahmad et al (2013) contended as working ethics.

Secondly, the investment on research is related to responsible research. Weber (2018) argued that long term investment signifies sustainability. In the meantime, it is also about making sound investment on responsible research. Moffatt (2011) emphasized on responsible authorship and research. Martinuzzi et al (2018) contended on long term gains for being responsible in research.

Thirdly, Qur'anic influence is related to character building. Rahim (2013) argued on character building which led to responsible authorship and research (Moffatt (2011). In addition, McGinn & Bosacki (2004) pointed to the practicing ethics. Consequently, Martinuzzi et al (2018) contended on long term gains for being responsible in research.

Figure 5 shows the three factors of Qur'anic ethics influencing responsible research for sustainable performance.
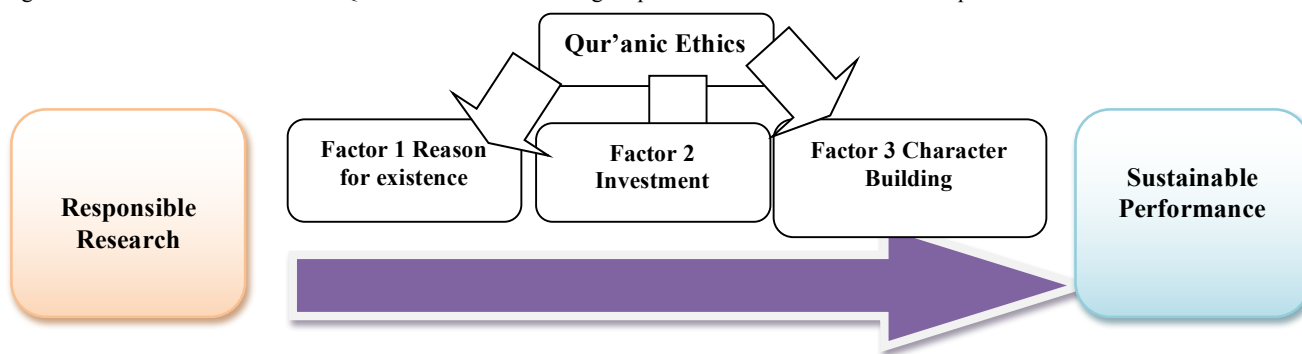
The three factors as shown in Figure 5 have incorporated the proposition of the study that responsible research that produce sustainable performance should assure that the outcomes of the research in line with the interest of stakeholders (as shown in Figure 3) so that the research outcomes bring benefit to humanity (as illustrated in Figure 1). Therefore, knowing the reasons for existence, the amount of investment came from the stakeholders as well, it becomes duty and responsibility of researchers to observe ethical decisions and actions (as summarised in Figure 2). These factors led to bountiful (*barakah*) and pleasure of Allah as explained by Islahi (1994) and Al-Islam (2009).

In terms of methodology, this study used qualitative method through personal interview with the informants to solicit their views on the Qur'anic factors influencing responsible research for sustainable performance is justified to understand the context of the study. There is no conflicting or outstanding issue from epistemology, ontology, paradigm and methodological perspective as qualitative research is purposely to explain the situation (ontology) with the perspective of knowledge (epistemology) grounded into the contexts. The qualitative method is interactive (Maxwell, 2012) between the researcher and the informants. The understanding of the situation is more realistic (Gray, 2013; Myers, 2013) with more credible results (Morrow, 2005) after being analysed until it reached saturation point (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Moreover, the trend in entrepreneurial studies is on action and realistic oriented (Lerner et al, 2018; Miska & Mendenhall, 2018).

The three ethical factors namely the reason for existence into the strategic direction and purpose of enterprises, being vigilant in investment for any venture, and being consistent with character (*khuluq*) have been explained as being authentic in managing organizational activities including responsible research (Ladkin, 2018; Miska & Mendenhall, 2018). Being authentic is also about being realistic, aesthethic and beneficial (Lerner et al, 2018; Ladkin, 2018). All these factors manifest the Qur'anic lessons from Surah al-Mulk for being ethical in conducting research so that the results of the research contribute to the performance of companies on sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

This study was to explore the Qur'anic factors influencing business researchers to have ethical conduct and responsible in all research projects. From the interview results of 10 technopreneurs argued on three factors of Qur'anic perspective influencing responsible research for sustainable performance. The feedback from the informants suggested three ethical factors namely the reason for existence into the strategic direction and purpose of enterprises, being vigilant in investment for any venture, and

being consistent with character (*khuluq*) manifest the Qur'anic lessons from Surah al-Mulk for being ethical in conducting research so that the results of the research contribute to the performance of companies on sustainable manner.

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