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**THE PERSONALITY OF DEVELOPMENT ACTORS IN THE
QUR'AN: FOCUS ON SURAH AL-FURQAN**

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Abstract

A development actor is an important element in the principles of development, whether in conventional development or Islamic-based development (PBI). Development will not materialise without its actors (*development actors*). Nevertheless, the function of humans as development actors differs both. In conventional development, humans are economic in nature, meaning that they solely produce and consume, whereas in PBI, humans are servants and Caliphs of Allah SWT. Since the actual function of humans is to be actors and development differs between conventional and PBI developments; hence, humans who play the role of Caliphs have their own personality and characteristics. The question is what are the moral values of humans as development actors according to surah al-Furqan? How is this characteristic applied in PBI? In order to answer both these questions, this working paper intended to achieve two main objectives. First, to identify the verses in surah al-Furqan that explain the moral values of humans as development actors; second, to analyse the moral values of development actors found in the verse. This qualitative study used the *al-mawdu'iy* interpretation (*tafseer*) analysis method and found that characteristics of development actors in PBI had 11 aspects regarding human morality. The moral values include being engaged in nightly religious rituals, fearing the torture of Allah SWT, assuming the *tawheed* of Allah SWT, concentrating on the commands and messages of Allah SWT and etc.

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1. Introduction

It is unlikely that every act of development would be implemented unless there is a development actor. In Islamic-based development theory (PBI), the actor is a human, just as in conventional development theory. However, the function of human beings as development actors in conventional development theory is different from that in Islamic-based development theory. In conventional development, humans are economic in nature because they produce and consume. The human function in PBI is to be the servants and Caliphs of Allah SWT. The difference is due to the worldview that forms the two development theories. The Islamic-based development theory was formed based on Islamic thought, while the conventional development theory is based on common sense and logic. Since the theory of custom development is commonplace then humans, according to the theory of conventional development, are only considered in terms of their ability and physical self without regard to spiritual aspects. Therefore, humans according to the theory of conventional development are just physical or pseudo-human beings or incomplete human beings. This is evident in the nature of production functions found in conventional development theory ($P = f(T, M, B, K \dots n)$, where P is production, M is capital, B is labour, K is entrepreneurship and n is the factor). In other words, the production factor that relates to human beings is labour and entrepreneurship. In fact, according to conventional development, human beings play the role of labour or entrepreneurship in reference to their physical strength, productivity and human ability; PBI refers to the spiritual aspect (faith) of humans and their main function of being servants and Caliphs of Allah SWT (Salleh, 2003).

2. Problem Statement

Human beings are an important aspect in the context of conventional development and PBI because human beings are directly involved in development activities. However, in conventional development, human beings are regarded as 'human economy' as their social task is to increase profits solely by using all means to achieve the desire of basic instincts (Mohamad & Ahmad, 2013). In Malaysia, there are numerous issues involving development actors, among them is corruption. This is because human beings who are directly involved in conventional development activities do not have the character of PBI actors. Human beings who function as servants and caliphs of Allah SWT should have a special character consistent with the demands of Islam. The statistics by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) showed cases of corruption in 2017 that 879 cases of corruption have been made by the MACC. Of these, 409 cases (46.5%) involved civil servants and the remaining 470 (53.5%) involved the public and the private sector (Ahmad Megat, & Mohamed, 2018). Based on this problem, the researcher found that the function and nature of human character in developmental aspects was less emphasized. Hence, humans need to understand the role given by Allah SWT that aims to achieve the ultimate goal in life, which is to seek the pleasure and blessings from Allah SWT (the pleasure of Allah SWT).

3. Research Questions

This paper posed three research questions:

- i) What is the background of Surah al-Furqan?
- ii) What are the verses in Surah al-Furqan that discuss the characters of an actor in PBI?
- iii) What are the characters of development actors in PBI as revealed in Surah al-Furqan?

4. Purpose of the Study

The objectives of this paper are as follows:

- i) To identify verses in surah al-Furqan that explain humans as actors of development.
- ii) To analyse the moral values of development actors that are found in the verses.

5. Research Methods

This was a qualitative study that examined both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources comprised previous studies and literature in the form of thesis, journals, websites and literary works related to the concept of development actors, conventional development theories and PBI. Reference was also made to the main sources of Islam, such as the al-Qur'an, Hadith and literary works related to interpretation scriptures. Data were analysed using the *al-Mawdhu'iy* interpretation method by examining the human theme in surah al-Furqan. This method had collected verses of the al-Qur'an related to a theme or title that focused either on a surah or various surah in the al-Qur'an (Rusdi, 2014). The human-related theme in surah al-Furqan was analysed using revered interpretation scriptures. This was preferred because it is appropriate for studies related to the al-Qur'an that are analysed using the *al-Mawdhu'iy* interpretation method.

6. Findings

To achieve both the objectives, the discussion in this paper was divided into three main sections. The first section discusses humans as actors of development, the second analyses the character of humans as development actors according to the al-Qur'an with particular reference to surah al-Furqan, and the third is the conclusion.

6.1. Operational Definition

This paper also discussed the operational definition of development actors. According Salleh (2003), development actors are humans who have three important relationships in their lives. First is the relationship with Allah SWT as the Creator and humans as servants; second is the human-to-human or intra-human relationship in the context of Caliphs of Allah SWT; and third is the relationship with the universe. As development actors, every human action is regarded as an act of worship because it is done a complete sense of responsibility by succumbing to Allah SWT in order to prosper in this world created by Allah SWT.

Human beings, as actors in PBI, are moulded through the function performed by humans as servants and Caliphs of Allah SWT. Human beings in PBI have an ultimate goal, which is development and a clear focus in life, which is to achieve the blessings (*redha*) of Allah SWT and pursue ultimate success (*al-falah*) (Ghazali, 1990; Ahmad, 2006). In the context of managing existing natural resources,

humans should be in total control of the trust and resources dedicated to them (Mansur, 2009). Furthermore, the key characteristic that reflects the cornerstone of human beings as development actors is a strong command for formulating developmental movements.

6.2. Human Character in Islamic-Based Development

Development actors or humans as a development entity are a group of people given the responsibility by Allah SWT, granted good judgment and conscience as well as honoured by Allah SWT (Abdul al-Hamid, 1998). These humans are provided with a mind, soul and physical ability that can administer and develop this universe. Thus, humans are required to better understand knowledge as a preparation for them to execute development because Allah SWT has acknowledged that man is the noblest of creatures (*asyraf al-makhlukat*) and the best among them (*ahsan al-khaliqin*) (Borham, 2007).

In the context of development, humans as development actors make up the fundamental principles of development. Development activities cannot be implemented in the absence of humans. Human behaviour and characteristics are shaped by a worldview (*tasawur*) and either, Western or Islamic-based thoughts. In PBI, humans tend to have a more specific function, which is as servants and Caliphs of Allah SWT. Humans are able to turn development activities into practice, which shows their subordination to Allah SWT, and carry out their duty as Caliphs. In actual fact, the function of humans as servants has been determined by Allah SWT even before time. Allah SWT exhorted, meaning:

And (remember) when thy Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their reins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves, (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea, verily. We testify. (That was) lest ye should say at the Day of Resurrection: Lo! of this we were unaware" (al-A'raf, 7:172).

This verse from Surah al-A'raf (7:172) explains that all humans, even before birth, had admitted that Allah SWT is their God, and they are HIS servants. Thus, the reason for Allah SWT to create humankind is for humankind to succumb to Him, be His obedient servant as well as adhere to the commands of Allah SWT and abstain from what He has forbidden. This is explained in surah al-Baqarah verse 30, as follows:

And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: Wilt thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not.

(Baqarah 2:30)

The verse above (2:30) explains that other than being servants of Allah SWT, humans also play a role in prospering and managing the earth in line with the Shari'a laws of Allah SWT. Thus, to help meet the demands of Allah SWT, humans are endowed with various strengths, such as the mind, physical capability, natural resources and the decrees of Allah SWT (Daud, 2004). Humans cannot be a slave to development, because development is humankind's own agenda (Salleh, 2003).

Thus, human morality, as a characteristic of actors in PBI, is shaped by the roles played by humans as servants and Caliphs of Allah SWT. In PBI, humans are seen as having clear and strong morals in

relation to the final aim of development and life, which is to achieve the blessings of Allah SWT (Ghazali, 1990; Ahmad, 2006). Besides that, in the context of managing existing natural resources, humans are trustworthy and can manage the resources with a high degree of dedication (Mansur, 2009). Furthermore, the main moral element that has become the mainstay for humans as the actors of development is the strong principle of tawheed that has helped them formulate development's work flow.

However, this paper focused on only one surah, namely Surah al-Furqan, which contains 77 verses that are distinctive and affording several privileges. Surah al-Furqan was chosen because it has the attributes of Allah SWT's servant with the term *ibad al-Rahman* (starting from verse 63 to 77).

Hence, it could be concluded that the human character of PBI actors is in line with the purpose of human creation on earth, which is to realize the mission of a servant and Caliph of Allah SWT. Thus, this particular characteristic of human beings is the realization of the function of a servant or Caliph of Allah SWT.

6.3. Surah al-Furqan's Profile

The position of Surah al-Furqan in the Qur'an in accordance with the order of surah shows that Surah al-Furqan was compiled after Surah al-Nur. However, it differs in its narration, it is the 42nd surah and was revealed before Surah al-Fatir and after Surah Yasin (Shihab, 2002). Surah al-Furqan is the 25th surah in the Qur'an according to the order in Rasm al-'Uthmani and contains 77 verses and 3780 letters. It was revealed in Mecca and is known as surah Makkiyyah. According to several scholars (Qutb, 2000; Ibn Kathir, 2000, al-Maturidiy, t.th:131; al-Damsyiqiy, 1997), this surah is named al-Furqan, which means separator, because it separates the truth from the false, the right and wrong as well as offers an explanation of what is halal and haram.

6.4. Analysis of Characteristics of Development Actors in Surah Al-Furqan

The moral values of development actors based on surah al-Furqan does not only rest in the inclination to succumb to Allah SWT (*al-akhlaq ma'a Allah*) but also to seriously improve their potential (*al-akhlaq ma'a al-nafs*) and intra-human relationships (*al-akhlaq ma'a al-ghayr*). The morality of development actors is taken from the gist of surah al-Furqan, which clearly discusses the characteristics of humans as servants and Caliphs of Allah SWT.

Table 01. The summary of moral values of development actors in surah al-Furqan.

Theme	Verses	Characteristics of PBI actors
<i>Akhlaq Ma'a Allah SWT</i>	25:64	i) Attending night prayers
	25:66	ii) Fearing the torture of Allah SWT
	25:68	iii) Succumbing to Allah SWT
	25:73	iv) Understanding the verses or words of Allah SWT
<i>Akhlaq Ma'a Al-Nafs</i>	25:67	i) Being moderate in spending
	25:68	ii) Abstaining from acts of <i>zina</i>
	25:70-71	iii) Always in repentance
	25:72	iv) Not doing anything meaningless
<i>Akhlaq Ma'a Al-Ghayr</i>	25:64	i) <i>Tawaduk</i>
	25:68	ii) Respecting life
	25:74	iii) Praying for family members

Table 1 shows that the morality of PBI actors is comprehensive as it covers all dimensions of life, including the relationship between humans and the Creator, other humans and the universe. Human morality based on the verses of surah al-Furqan is divided into three sections. First, human character in the relationship with Allah SWT (*akhlak ma'a Allah*) comprises characteristics such as performing night prayers, fearing torture in Hell, succumbing to Allah SWT and understanding the commands and messages of Allah SWT. Second, human character towards oneself (*akhlak ma'a al-nafs*), which comprises 5 attributes namely, tawaduk, abstaining from zina, taubat nasuha, spending moderately and leaving behind everything that is meaningless. Third, human character in intra-human relationships and the source of the universe (*akhlak ma'a al-ghayr*), which comprises three human attributes, namely generosity, respecting life and seeking the well-being of family members.

In a similar vein, the character of these PBI development actors are the consequence of interrelated human functions, such as being servants and Caliphs, which is consistent with the teachings of the al-Qur'an. This is also discussed in surah al-Furqan, which relates to the characteristics of the most beloved servant of Allah SWT (*Ibad al-Rahman*).

7. Conclusion

In conventional development theory, humans are presumed to be economic entities whose function is only to produce and consume. Hence, only their strengths, as in their physical body, mind, skills and all physical elements, are considered. Besides that, humans are presumed to be the measure of all things as well as the carrier and source of all rights. It is clear that their role in conventional development theory is not more than being a commodity or tool. They are believed to be created solely for implementing their stereotypical and circular function as consumers, to grow, learn, work, form families, reproduce and eventually, die. Their function according to the conventional development theory is clearly contrary to the human functions according to tasawur al-Qur'an, which is to be a servant and Caliph of Allah SWT. The status of being servants and Caliphs to Allah SWT has instilled Islamic-based development actors with a philosophy and function that differs with conventional development actors. As servants and Caliphs of Allah SWT, involvement in development activities is a form of devotion to Allah SWT. In this sense, humans in PBI unwaveringly defend their feeling of servitude to Allah SWT and implement the role of a Caliph.

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