KICSS2023

Kedah International Conference on Social Science and Humanities
UiTM Kedah (Online), Malaysia, 21-22 June 2023:
The 3th Islamic Management Development Conference
(IMDEC)

Islamic Perspectives On Recognizing Opportunities: Insights From Malay-Muslim Academic Librarians

Haziah Sa'ari[1]*, Jafalizan Md Jali[2]*, Marlia Idrus[3]
*Corresponding Author:

1 School of Information Management, Wellington School of Business and Government, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
2 School of Information Science, College of Computing, Informatics and Media, Universiti Teknologi MARA ,Malaysia

azie.crystal2@gmail.com afalizan@uitm.edu.my marlia945@uitm.edu.my

Abstract
This paper aims to identify the antecedents of entrepreneurial competencies among Malay-Muslim academic librarians in Malaysian public universities. To collect qualitative data, ten academic librarians were interviewed in focus group discussions. The findings revealed that academic librarians' practices are influenced by their personal beliefs and knowledge of Islam, which have become ingrained in their Muslim way of life despite their lack of understanding of entrepreneurial competencies. These factors have a significant impact on librarians' cognitive processes, thus, on their entrepreneurial behavior. The findings suggest that it is pivotal to strengthen the personal beliefs and knowledge of academic librarians to be entrepreneurial.

1.0 Introduction

To keep up with the implementation of the entrepreneurial university concept in the knowledge economy, universities around the world have assigned research, innovation, and invention a high strategic priority. Likewise, their roles as internal agents drastically alter the functions and responsibilities of academic librarians (AL) employed by their respective institutions. According to Malaysian perspectives, AL lacks the entrepreneurial competencies (EC), innovation-oriented behavior, and skills required to produce and promote products and services that lead to new inventions and innovations (Mohamad Noorman Masrek, 2012). However, internal and external factors significantly contributed to Malaysia AL's lack of entrepreneurial competencies. Haziah (2018) found that ALs in Malaysia would be more entrepreneurial if they were supported by internal factors such as organizational structure, guided by transformational library leaders, and provided with the necessary entrepreneurial training. This paper attempts to address the current knowledge gap, as it is acknowledged that little is known about AL's Islamic perspectives on EC and that there is a dearth of evidence on the topic.

2.0 Literature Review

EC is the knowledge, skills, abilities, values, attitudes, personalities, and expertise that result in entrepreneurial action and success (Kiggundu, 2002; Morris et al., 2013; Botha & Taljaard; 2021). In Islam, an entrepreneur's characteristics encompass economic, social, environmental, and value-based roles. The book by Torrey (1892) reveals that the Qur'an contains approximately 370 verses on business, entrepreneurship, and theology. Torrey stated that the relationship between Allah and humans is based on commerce, His system is based on ledgers and checks, and He is the Judge, The Giver of Justice.

2.1 RO

Opportunity recognition has been identified as one of the most essential competency for entrepreneurial success (DeTienne & Chandler, 2004). It is defined as a solid cognitive psychology perspective on a person's ability to RO embedded in the development of an individual's cognition shaped by prior experience, self-efficacy, beliefs, and values that influence and provide insights in the decision process (Rodriguez-Lara & Ponti, 2017; Baron & Ensley, 2006).

The requirements for recognizing opportunities are classified into three categories: (i) a cognitive psychology perspective (Pech & Cameron, 2006; Wahyudi et al., 2021) (ii) a social network which leads to the emergence of new opportunities and connections (Ardichvili & Cardozo, 2000; Abd Rahim et al., 2021); and (iii) the environmental factor that inspires individuals to recognize the opportunities a reform movement necessitates (Soleas, 2021; Subotnik et al., 2019). According to Islam, living as a Muslim provides the greatest opportunity to devote enormously and generously to Allah's bounty and grace in this world and the next. No matter how difficult life's challenges are, Allah commanded all believers to keep and maintain their faith, "so do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers" (Qur'an 3:139).

There are excellent opportunities everywhere, but the entrepreneur must be able to recognize, evaluate, and exploit them (Ramadani & Girguri, 2011). Thus, Islam urges its adherents to pursue opportunities for entrepreneurship by acquiring knowledge, as knowledgeable person will be competent, authoritative, and self-assured in his ability to make accurate decisions, and will be able to contribute his knowledge to his self-benefit, family, society, religion, race, and country. In The Holy Qur'an (40:54), Allah states that the distinguishing characteristics of a knowledgeable and thoughtful individual are their wisdom and intelligence, "As guidance and a reminder for those of understanding".

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to conduct an in-depth investigation. The participants consisted of five senior ALs in grade S41 (Librarians and Related Information Professionals under the Public Service Department of Malaysia endorsement). These individuals possessed 10–15 years of experience. In terms of demographic distribution, 60% of librarians are aged between 40 and 50 years; thus, all selected respondents fall within this bracket. Senior librarians over the age of 50 constitute 25% of the general population, but their representation is lower because many opt for early retirement or transition to different career paths.

All the chosen participants had earned both honors bachelor's and master's degrees from a range of accredited universities. The majority specialized in librarianship or information management. The selection of these participants for interviews was strategic. They were chosen by the head of the department in conjunction with the top management of the library. Their selection was based on a combination of their rotational work assignments and their involvement in innovation group projects. During the period of data collection, Table 1 reveals that all participants consistently maintained Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) between 90 and 95% in their overall work performance.

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Elements of Sampling	CASE A		CASE B	
Academic Library Location	Public University -Centre of Peninsular Malaysia		Public University	
Working Experience	Multiple Department (Rotate Basis)		Multiple Department (Rotate Basis)	
Number of Librarian/Gender	5		5	
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
Race/Religion	Malay/Muslim			
	3	2	3	2
Years of Experience	10-15 years			
Age Range	40-50		40-50	
Overall Library Staff Strength	170 – 180		170-180	
Overall Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	91% - 95%		91% - 95%	
Qualification/Number of Librarian	Degree/Post Graduate in Library Science/ Information Management	5	Degree/Post Graduate in Library Science/ Information Management	5
Additional Degree	Degree in Botany	1		
	Degree in Islamic Studies	1		
	Masters in Information Management/ Library Science	5	Masters in Information Management/ Library Science	5
Professional Membership	PPM		PPM	
Current Position	Senior Librarian		Senior Librarian	
Geographical Location	Peninsular Malaysia (Centre)		Peninsular Malaysia (South)	

4.0 Findings

4.1 Demographic profile

The study involved a carefully curated cohort of ten librarians, strategically chosen to represent a diverse range of experiences and perspectives within the field. Among these participants, six were females and four were males, aged between 40 and 45 years. The leadership of the library carefully oversaw the selection process with approval from the university's top management, ensuring that each participant had more than five years of professional experience and a strong background in librarianship. In line with our qualitative research approach, we conducted in-depth interviews to delve into the rich experiences and nuanced viewpoints of these librarians. This method allowed us to explore their thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes comprehensively, shedding light on the intricacies of their roles and responsibilities. A distinctive demographic trend that emerged from our findings was the notable prevalence of females within this specific age group, especially within the public sector of Malaysian librarianship. It is essential to emphasize that our research was intentionally limited in scope to this carefully selected cohort. Extrapolating this gender distribution to characterize the broader landscape of Malaysian librarianship would necessitate a more extensive and inclusive investigation. Furthermore, academically, our participants exhibited diverse qualifications that reflected the multidisciplinary nature of the library profession. Their educational backgrounds spanned various fields, including Library Science, Botany, Agricultural Science, and Islamic Studies. Six of our participants held postgraduate qualifications in information management, signifying their specialized expertise in resource optimization and management. The remaining four participants possessed master's degrees in library science, highlighting their proficiency in traditional library practices. Another noteworthy aspect of our participants' profiles is their extensive working experience, with each boasting over five years of service in the field. Their prolonged engagement within the Librarians Association of Malaysia, exceeding five years, is indicative of their commitment to continuous learning and professional development. This commitment was further underscored by their consistent Key Performance Indicator (KPI) scores, which consistently ranged between 90-95%, affirming their dedication and competence within the domain of librarianship.

4.2 Opportunities arise from knowledge and experience
Workplace challenges often pave the way for invaluable insights and experiences. An informant captured the essence of dashed hopes saying, "Rejection is always disheartening, especially when you're anticipating positive results from the highest level of management" (CSA, Q1, B3, ALC). Economic dynamics can indeed hinder innovation. As one participant outlined, "Economic downturns can derail our most creative initiatives, especially when funds are rerouted to departments that yield direct, measurable outcomes" (CSA, Q1, A2, ALD). However, some view such setbacks as catalysts for growth. An informant opined, "Adversities and failures have been my guiding lights. They constantly encourage me to explore new avenues and voice my expectations clearly" (CSA, Q1, B3, ALB). The intersection of faith and professional resilience is also noteworthy. An informant shared, "In the realm of faith, trials, and tribulations are considered divine tests. Faith strengthens self-awareness, especially from an Islamic perspective" (CSA, Q1, A2, ALB).

4.3 Profession as opportunities to fulfill social obligations
The library profession is not solely about books and databases; it's a conduit to impart societal value. Despite the shared sentiment of discouragement when faced with rejection, particularly from top-tier management (CSA, Q1, B3, ALC), there's a resilient spirit among librarians to meet societal needs. The constraints of a tight budget can stymie innovation, making librarians question the very essence of their efforts: "Sometimes the constant strive to meet expectations feels futile, especially when the economy plays spoilsport. It often feels like a tightrope walk between sustaining creativity and ensuring pragmatic allocations" (CSA, Q1, A2, ALD). However, the profession is also seen as a platform to voice expectations and encourage mutual respect (CSA, Q1, B3, ALB). The intertwining of faith with one's professional role is evident when an informant cites, "Self-awareness is deeply rooted in faith and spirituality, emphasizing the significance of trials in shaping a believer's journey" (CSA, Q1, A2, ALB).

4.4 Workplace pressure to straighten faith
Budget constraints within libraries often act as a crucible, forging librarians' innovative spirit and adaptability. The quest for alternative resources, particularly the embrace of free internet software, reveals the librarian's innate resourcefulness. One passionate informant passionately remarked, "In the face of budget constraints, open-source tools shine as a beacon of hope. They not only offer significant cost savings but also provide the canvas for customization, correction, and enhancement, open to anyone with the requisite skills" (CSB, Q1, E2, ALC). This journey of adaptation and resilience doesn't stand alone. It mirrors the evolving landscape of libraries in the digital era. In this transformative process, librarians recognize the importance of collective decision-making and patron engagement. As one insightful informant emphasized, "We're stepping into an era where collaboration and co-creation with our patrons, facilitated through platforms like social media, are becoming paramount. Consulting them before investing in new e-databases ensures our resources are channeled where they matter most" (CSB, Q1, A3, ALD).

4.5 Realizing that constraints provide opportunities for innovation
Constraints, though demanding, possess the potential to ignite the flames of innovation within the realm of librarianship. As one librarian aptly put it, "Open-source tools are a boon. They not only save costs but can be customized, corrected, and enhanced by anyone with the right skills" (CSB, Q1, E2, ALC). These tools, celebrated for their adaptability and versatility, have emerged as indispensable assets in the librarian's arsenal. Beyond cost savings, open-source solutions empower librarians to tailor software to their specific needs, opening a realm of possibilities for customization and enhancement. This dynamic approach aligns with the innovative spirit of modern librarians, who actively seek to evolve their services to meet the evolving needs of their patrons. Furthermore, the practice of actively engaging with patrons has become fundamental in modern library operations. Librarians transcend their traditional roles as mere guardians of knowledge; they have evolved into proactive listeners and responders to the evolving needs of their communities. As

another librarian emphasized, "Engaging our patrons, especially through social media, before investing in new e-databases ensures we only procure what's essential" (CSB, Q1, A3, ALD). This collaborative approach ensures that libraries remain finely attuned to the ever-changing landscape of user demands.

4.6 University policy/status as a gateway to professional enhancement
Within the hallowed halls of a research-intensive institution, librarians find themselves imbued with a profound sense of duty and ambition. The prestige associated with such an academic environment serves as a powerful catalyst for professional growth and innovation. As one librarian poignantly expressed, "Being a part of such a prestigious institution motivates me to continually innovate and rigorously assess my performance metrics" (CSA, Q1, A2, ALA). The allure of contributing to academia and gaining visibility in research becomes a driving force shaping the professional trajectories of librarians. The prospect of authoring a research publication holds transformative potential for one's career prospects, as highlighted by an informant who remarked, "The publication of scholarly research can single-handedly reshape one's career trajectory" (CSA, Q1, A2, ALC). This aspiration not only aligns with the academic ethos of the institution but also underscores the librarian's role as a key contributor to the scholarly endeavors of the university community. Amidst the pursuit of academic excellence, librarians remain steadfast in upholding the ethical pillars of their profession. Intellectual property rights take center stage, as librarians diligently safeguard and champion the principles of fair use and proper attribution. As stated by one librarian, "Ensuring the protection of intellectual property rights is not just a responsibility; it's a fundamental duty within the academic ecosystem" (CSB, Q1, A2, ALA).

4.7 Upholding librarianship ethics: enjoining right and forbidding wrong
In the realm of librarianship, a profession rooted in the dissemination of knowledge and ethical practices, informants passionately emphasize the paramount importance of integrity, even when confronted with adversity or criticism. As one resolute librarian asserted, "My duty as a librarian transcends the mere act of pleasing superiors. My allegiance lies in fulfilling my responsibilities with unwavering dedication, guided by the belief that my path has been divinely orchestrated" (CSA, Q3, F1, ALC). The commitment to the broader mission of knowledge dissemination pulsates within the hearts of these librarians, propelling them forward with unwavering determination. It is a dedication that resonates deeply, as another steadfast informant expressed, "I am driven by the profound mission of our university—a mission firmly grounded in the relentless pursuit of knowledge. In my role, I spare no effort in navigating the vast realm of knowledge, striving to make impactful contributions that uphold this mission" (CSB, Q3, F2, ALE). Within the landscape of librarianship, these individuals stand as embodiments of ethical principles. Intellectual freedom, equitable access to information, and responsible stewardship of knowledge are not just principles; they are living ideals that guide their daily actions. Their commitment to enjoining right and forbidding wrong reflects the profound influence of librarianship ethics on shaping their character and actions.

4.8 Proposed Model

Fig. 1: RO Among ALs From an Islamic Perspective, Leading to Innovative Behavior (developed by authors)

Based on the findings, we proposed a model for "RO Among ALs From an Islamic Perspective, Leading to Innovative Behavior" (Figure 1). The model includes the Quran and Hadith, competencies, and Malay cultural identity. These factors form a competitive personality, which affects librarians' beliefs and perceptions of workplace recognition opportunities. Thus, ALs who adopt these traits will succeed in their innovative behavior and submission to Allah to earn His favor.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 EC is a symbol of obedient and ibadah (worship)
Cases A and B prove that the ALs participating in this study are flourishing. AL is motivated It is also an act of ibadah, which is a component of fardhu kifayah (78:11) "And made the day as a means of subsistence? And have made the day for livelihood. And have appointed the day for livelihood. And We have made the daytime for earning a livelihood". Through this belief, the AL can maintain an open mind, persistence, engagement, and enthusiasm to carry out his responsibilities, despite university status changes, bureaucratic sluggishness, top management demands, and user requirements. ALs believe Allah's test is a chance to learn and solve problems. Allah mentioned it in the Quran: (29:2-3) "Do people think that they will be let go merely by saying: "We believe," and that they will not be tested, or We indeed tested those who went before them?
ALs with a bachelor's degree in Islamic studies respond more adaptability, enthusiastically, and confidently to challenges. The analysis also showed that ALs who initially disagreed eventually supported their colleague. The answers confirmed the religious and Malay identity values taught at a young age. Malay identity and Islam have always coexisted. Most modern scholars believe Islam's purity and perfection are the main reasons the Malay community chooses it as its identity. Many explanations exist. Islamic teachings fit well with Malay culture, which values nature and a gentle, natural lifestyle (Rahimin Affandi 2005, pp. 20–21). After these discoveries, Al-Attas (1972) argues that Islam is responsible for introducing a culture of rational thought and knowledge that rejects superstition and myth to the Malay world.

5.2 Unity/Brotherhood in practicing knowledge and Skills
The analysis revealed that AL collaborates with a specialized creative and innovation group (KIK) to investigate RO, which develops projects to solve problems or enhance tasks. This adheres to the Islamic concept of unity, which is the basis for the discussion. The uncertainties in the workplace or environment, such as the post-epidemic era, changes in the role of universities, budgetary concerns, and users' demands for diversity, cannot be handled by an individual; therefore, Islam advises addressing them as a team. In addition, every Muslim is considered a brother, and this relationship can be applied in various of contexts and situations. Allah says (3:103)" And hold firmly to the rope of Allah1 and do not be divided. Remember Allah's favor upon you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts, so you—by His grace—became brothers."

5.3 Contributor to elevating the status of knowledge and the profession as a knowledge transmitter
According to the participants, their profession enabled them to continue identifying opportunities to elevate the status of knowledge in a civilized society. Their role as an AL is that of an information channeling agent and knowledge delivery facilitator. To realize the knowledge civilization, they are eager to find solutions and enhance the quality of national services. In Islam, they acknowledge that they should honor Allah. The first "instruction" in the Qur'an (96:1) addressed to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH to "read", emphasizes the significance of Muslims seeking knowledge, deriving the motivation to contribute to its advancement, and disseminating it for the benefit of all humanity.
When assisting library patrons in need, ALs do not let the extensive knowledge and experience become a source of pride; instead, they approach the responsibility with modesty, patience, and openness. This is because they are human beings, and as such, they have limitations; although the community views them as knowledgeable. Allah reminds (18:109), Say, ´O Prophet, ` "If the ocean were ink for writing the Words of my Lord, it would certainly run out before the Words of my Lord were finished, even if We refilled it with its equal." Negative perceptions of the profession, especially regarding return on investment or work performance evaluation, do not deter them. Allah's Qur'an promises (16:96) "Whatever you have will end, but what Allah has is lasting. And We will surely give those who were patient their reward according to the best of what they used to do". In addition, AL believed that the purchased resources should be utilized to the greatest extent possible. Given that AL manages the library's resources as trustees, these resources must be promoted and marketed.

5.4 Opportunity to train library leaders and shape self-leadership traits
According to previous research, leadership issues in academic libraries are complex for library professionals to accommodate due to changes in the education system (Aslam, 2018; Spies, 2000). AL believed that continuing to foster leadership values could resolve the profession's leadership crisis. All Muslims are caliphs and must lead, inspire, initiate, and succeed. By accepting Rasulullah SAW as their model leader with the values of loyalty, truthfulness, dependability, selflessness, ethics, and passion, the AL realized they are accountable caliphs who always praise Allah, put His rights and laws first in all aspects of life, and seek His pleasure and mercy above all else.
They are also aware that they must strengthen the workplace's culture of leadership development by initiating innovation projects, leading strategic decision-making about facility priorities, collection development, maintaining good relationships with colleagues, and accepting constructive criticism. As in the Islamic concept of "al Falah" (real success achieved by those who obey and obey all of Allah

s.w.t.), these qualities and skills work together to achieve success, restoring the librarian profession to its former glory. Allah promised in Surah Al Buruj Ayat 11, "Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds will have gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the great attainment".

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The intricate interplay of knowledge-based factors, the guiding principles of Islam as a way of life, and the rich tapestry of Malay culture profoundly shape the practices and, perhaps more crucially, the deeply held beliefs of ALs regarding their role in RO. This synthesis of attributes converges with one's psychology, intelligence, and skill set, and the alignment of these facets takes on paramount significance. It is the empowerment derived from these multifaceted dimensions that fundamentally impacts the cognitive landscape of librarians, thereby influencing the trajectory of RO and the cultivation of creativity.

A prudent acknowledgment of the study's limitations is essential. Our research has deliberately homed in on a specific cohort of ALs, set against the backdrop of a particular cultural and institutional milieu. The exercise of generalizing our findings to a wider spectrum of librarians or diverse cultural environments necessitates circumspection. Moreover, our research methodology relied upon self-reporting by participants, a facet that may introduce subtle biases or variances in response. In future research endeavors, it would be judicious to encompass more expansive and diversified participant pools, while concurrently embracing mixed-method approaches to temper these inherent limitations. Within the expansive realm of scholarship, our study opens up new vistas for exploration. First and foremost, broadening the scope to encompass a more variegated and inclusive cross-section of librarians drawn from diverse cultural pedigrees promises a deeper well of insights into the multifarious cultural influences at play in the realm of RO practices. Furthermore, a longitudinal inquiry holds the potential to trace the evolutionary trajectory of these practices over time, providing a dynamic and nuanced perspective. In addition, probing the transformative impact of specific interventions or pedagogical programs aimed at enhancing RO and fostering innovative behavior among librarians could be a fertile ground for investigation. Lastly, a discerning exploration of the pivotal role that RO plays in catalyzing broader objectives and the impact of academic libraries within the tapestry of higher education presents an intellectually compelling avenue for research. It is worth noting that Islam, as a comprehensive way of life, inherently instills the ethos of seeking and capitalizing upon opportunities. Rather than viewing the myriad challenges endemic to the librarianship profession as insurmountable impediments, Islam serves as a beacon, beckoning ALs to acknowledge the current operational landscape. It exhorts them to engage in introspection and exploration, aligning their collective strengths and opportunities with the trajectory of librarianship's future.

This calls for the meticulous development of methodological frameworks that facilitate the recognition and ensuing amplification of these strengths and opportunities. In this endeavor, the individual's beliefs, knowledge, and perceptions emerge as potent drivers. Islam, with its profound teachings, offers a structured framework for harnessing the power of appreciative inquiry—a process that seeks to illuminate the purpose behind one's existence in this temporal world. This strategy harnesses iman (faith) as an indomitable force for the pursuit of virtuous deeds. The rewards are not limited to mere quantifiable value but extend to the promise of spiritual recompense in the hereafter. As we cast our gaze upon the ever-evolving issues and trends that reverberate through the landscape of academic libraries and the custodians of knowledge therein, it becomes abundantly clear that academic librarians must be nurtured with opportunity competencies from the inception of their careers. In light of this, we strongly advocate for the implementation of early training initiatives, concerted awareness campaigns, and deliberate exposure programs within the hallowed halls of schools of librarianship or allied faculties. These formative experiences are pivotal in furnishing nascent ALs with the competencies requisite to adroitly navigate the dynamic and ever-evolving terrain of librarianship. In summation, our study serves as a poignant testament to the intricate and profound interplay between personal beliefs, cultural dynamics, and professional practices among ALs. It underscores the transformative potential latent in the alignment of knowledge-based factors, Islamic tenets, and the kaleidoscope of Malay culture. The voyage toward a more empowered and proactive librarianship profession commences with a profound comprehension of these dynamics and a steadfast commitment to perpetual growth and development.

Acknowledgement

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