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This Decade, Your Decade: Strengthening Young Entrepreneurs Integrity: Integrity as a Commodity, Business Sustainability Activator

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Abstract

This concept paper discusses youth with integrity as an important asset in ensuring the viability and management of a business as the main discussion. Writers used documents analysis in the qualitative approach, with the assumption youth with integrity can be a commodity and a driving force for the survival of business management. Apart from that, this paper also discusses the importance of cultivating an attitude of integrity among youth entrepreneurs to ensure the continuity of the business. Based on the previous research, results show the approach of strengthening integrity will help the formation of youth who are competitive and strong from various aspects of their lives. The products, services, traders' integrity, and challenges in creating youth with integrity are among the raised issues in this article. At the end of the discussion, the role of young entrepreneurs as agents of change to the entrepreneurs with quality and integrity will be able to form a group of future entrepreneurs who are highly capable and able to compete on the world stage with excellence. **Keywords:** Product, Services, Integrity, Entrepreneur, Agent of Change

Introduction

Businesses that are based on integrity by ensuring the products or services are valuable to their customers will directly gave tons of positive impacts and help in sustaining the business from various aspects. In 1979, Philip Crosby who was an author and thinker in the field of quality management, through his book entitled Quality is Free: The Art of Making Certain Quality (one of the renowned titles for the field of quality management science) has started quite different wave in economic thought from the intuitive (counter-intuitive) a revolution in the field of quality management in the United States and Japan. The logic stated by the one of the most well known figure in quality management is simple, which is asserting the cost in producing a product is lower if the way of carrying it out is proper from the beginning. This is because the cost to justify any defects on a product is higher. Crosby (1979) also emphasizes,

quality is part of business integrity. So it is clearly shows, a business either in the form of production of quality products or delivery of quality services is a business of integrity.

In addition, the young entrepreneurs business through the application of integrity values in resource chain management (supply chain), manufacturing, and delivery of services or sales of the products. Currently many reported issues related to low-quality products or services or sub-standards that are mostly affected by leakages in the quality management integrity of the enterprise. Crosby, further in his book has shown the investment in product quality control is more worth compared to the effort and cost for product repair, which will lead to various possibilities including product research, measurement, and repair, or even worse causing customer loss in the future. According to Crosby (1979), when an enterprise has to bear those complaints event costs or product returns from customers, it will increase almost up to 30 percent or more of the original production total cost in most scenarios. The additional costs that have to be borne by this business or enterprise will inevitably harm the growth of the enterprise. The advantages of these downstream activities are not easy to assess or directly feel based on monetary arrangements or through figures directly by entrepreneurs, yet the impact is profound and invaluable. This is concluded by Crosby's words in his book, "Quality is free. Not in the gifts form, but it is free".

Methodology

The methodology while writing this concept paper uses a qualitative method of document analysis based on library research. This method requires the researchers to read and analyze a diverse collection of articles and other written resources. This way may help researchers get the answers about the importance of integrity among young entrepreneurs in ensuring the viability of a business.

Literature Review

Islam encourages Muslims to venture into entrepreneurship but the implementation must be based on Islamic law by abandoning prohibitions and carrying out instructions. The implications of entrepreneurship that comply with Islamic law will help in creating a paradigm shift in Islamic business culture. Certainly, by adopting Islamic business culture, definitely leave a big and positive impact on the economic progress of the ummah (Azman et. al., 2021). Entrepreneurial is one of the most important qualities in ensuring the success of an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial quality can be measured based on personality factors and entrepreneurial orientation (Raiz et al., 2019). Quality management methods are usually practiced in the manufacture of products (repetitive process) or repeated services (continuous service), therefore, Crosby and his contemporaries quality management thinkers such as Deming (1900-1993); Juran (1904-2008) argued that quality management is very closely related to the concept of integrity.

In most scenarios related to quality management, problems arise related to the failure issue usually occurs due to superior or top management lack in understanding their needed responsibility to be fulfilled (by setting product or service delivery requirements), or fails to act under proper practice (such as through adherence to budgets) in every decision or action taken. Lack of support from the government and the private sector is also a challenge faced by most entrepreneurs. Furthermore, they also lack the capital to innovate and technology apart from having difficulties in market expending (Rosmiza & Halida, 2020). The success of

an organization or business usually happens when the top management or entrepreneurs realize the importance of not only the need to maintain and manage the continuous improvement of service or product quality, but also ensure adherence to the concept of integrity highlighted as an important value to practice in an organization. Certainly, accepting and being comfortable without being monitored and ensuring the application of integrity values must be adhered to at all times, thus subsequently practiced by every member in the organization or business. The incurred cost will be very detrimental to the organization or company, and directly affect their survival in the long run.

The application of the integrity concept or failure in such endeavors is still one of the most critical challenges in business today. To ensure whether the product for customers are comply with the promised requirements and specifications, or ensuring that legal or financial advice given to customers meets their desired requirements the concept of integrity in fulfilling promises is crucial. Even in the scenario of conducting surgical operations in a hospital. Young entrepreneurs are responsible for ensuring and delivering the best quality and results promised and successfully not only to their customers but also shareholders and society. Various studies have been done by scholars in the country such as the provision of entrepreneurial characteristics among parole prisoners (Fauziah et. al., 2016), the practice of trust attitude among entrepreneurs (Nadzri & Yaacob, 2020), adherence to the production of quality products and services (Berjaya, 2009), also a research focus on the quality of small and medium entrepreneurs (Razuan et. al., 2019), and behavioral intentions of the acceptance of electronic commerce system (e-commerce) among Malaysian Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) entrepreneurs (Ruzanna et al., 2019). Research result shows the involvement of young entrepreneurs with integrity in business is very important and should be emphasized in the development of the entrepreneurial framework in Malaysia. They venture into business simply because they want to earn an income to support themselves or as a side income to improve their standard of living.

According to Sutter, Bruton dan Chen (2018), based on their study published in the Journal of Business Venturing (one of the high-impact journals for entrepreneurship), with more than a third of the world's population living in poverty, entrepreneurs offer high potential in changing the economic landscape of most countries, and the development of new companies based on technology is important at this time. Besides, today development of the digital economy and access to a wider range of users opens up very exciting opportunities for young entrepreneurs in starting businesses, and this has been proven by the success of Mark Zuckerberg (founder of Facebook) the youngest billionaire (owning over USD100 billion) in the world at the age of 36. Nevertheless, the success of these young entrepreneurs must be accompanied by ethics and integrity, to ensure the business or enterprise run is not only able to help generate the economy but also can provide a sustainable socio-economic impact for the country. Young entrepreneurs who are part of the country's economic pillars should adopt this concept of quality based on integrity, applied as the world practice of business management targets every business capable of meeting 99.99966% (Sujova et al., 2016; Pereira et al., 2019) as practiced by most global industry players such as multinational entities (MNCs) through Six Sigma practices. Each day, every owner or manager, or young entrepreneur will face various opportunities that sometimes turn into pressure to ensure transparency of services and products, apply something diplomatically and even have to comply with cost pressures. At that point, young entrepreneurs need to do something right and early on to ensure the right decisions are taken.

However, adherence to the concept of integrity in this business is not easy, like quoting from the teachings of Confucianism founded by Confucius (551-479 BC), which emphasizes the great man must have a constant affection of nature full feelings and movements free from perversion and the nature of violence. Those who have such a nature will be considered as a great person, noble personality and is known as Chun Tze (Hartati, 2016). This Chun Tze is a major goal in the humanitarian ideology of Confucianism, an ideology that strongly emphasizes the importance of relationships related to the question of human social life among human beings, also be closely related to the world of entrepreneurship. The words of Rasulullah s.a.w: "Trustworthy and trustworthy traders will be with the Prophets, those who can be trusted (siddigin) and those who are martyred" (Sunan Al-Tarmidhi, 1998). Besides, Professor Tony Simons with his team has reviewed 76 hotel franchises in the United States and his study clearly shows integrity is very important and leaves an impact on the viability of the hotel enterprise. Plus, one research by Professor Luigi Zingales of the University of Chicago and his team on a study on employees of 1,000 companies in the United States was published and conducted in 2014, has shown practicing integrity values in the company by keeping promises to stakeholders (stakeholders) recorded better profits (Guiso et al., 2014). The scenarios shown in these two master's studies demonstrate the importance of integrity in business sustainability.

Every wise and integrity decision should underpin every business affair even if sometimes (or most of the time) it requires more careful planning and also takes more time than short decisions that will ultimately be detrimental to young entrepreneurs in their business. Regardless of the impact in the future, short decisions by setting aside aspects of compliance with specific procedures to quality control, over time cause the management of the business to deviate from the real purpose or termed as "commitment drift". While there are reasonable excuses in the minds of entrepreneurs (in this context young entrepreneurs) when decisions are made, such as to protect the good name of their brand or business, telling the real thing is better than trying to do temporary remedies. In addition, we may take the example of the ethical and integrity manner shown by automotive giants such as Honda and Toyota. They are willing to pull out their products back in the market and provide appropriate compensation to consumers to ensure their products in the market are quality and safe for their customers to use. Although this action is detrimental it leaves a huge impact in convincing existing users as well as their new customer prospects, the customers believe the management and company have higher reliability and integrity. This situation further increases trust in the products and services offered by these two mega-giant automotive companies, as Honda and Toyota are product manufacturers and also provide after-sales services for their products.

Honesty and Transparency as the Foundation to Success

Business integrity in the management aspect will prevent entrepreneurs from causing "compromise costs" ("costs of compromise") which is a threat to the reputation of the business, creates stress, and adds complexity in the business management. Most of the entrepreneurs will certainly try to avoid these unfortunate events from being known by customers and the general public. Furthermore, without proper mitigation and improvement processes, these actions can affect their business activities, sustainability, and viability. Definitely, they can overcome this detrimental issue from the beginning if these entrepreneurs practice the concept of quality management with integrity.

Honesty and transparency are also the foundations that can make a transaction or management process easier and simpler. Generally, if the entrepreneur is able to embody these noble values, which are closely linked to efforts in ensuring clearly manifested integrity of their business, this directly impacts the entire business value chain. It does not only involve the entrepreneurs but also business suppliers, customers, and the local community. Plus will indirectly receive a positive impact from the integrity practice through the application in the business affairs of these young entrepreneurs.

In order to sustain their business, these young entrepreneurs should always keep their promises toward customers. Every product must be met the customer's specifications and services detail. In this modern era with high-tech technology, customers prefer using social media rather than directly contacting merchants and entrepreneurs when it comes to raising their complaints. The complaints went viral and affect other customers' trustworthiness, integrity against those particular entrepreneurs and their businesses. Then the relationship with customers, awareness, and courage to do something (courage of conviction) will ensure young entrepreneurs dare to be the trigger to efforts in ensuring customers are satisfied with their products and services rather than letting it become a problem in the future (Paul, 2015). Entrepreneurs with integrity will ensure "customer needs" (alignment) are met and "customer participation" (engagement) in the product or service improvement feedback provided becomes a culture that will definitely have a positive impact on the business of these young entrepreneurs.

In various latest research methods, scholars and writers in the field of management have also clearly demonstrated how entrepreneurs and companies with integrity earn their financial returns, especially when practicing integrity values in their business dealings. In the year 2002, Professor Tony Simons from Cornell University United States of America in his book entitled The Integrity Dividend: Leading by the Power of Your Word, throughout the study he has conducted there is a difference of only 3 percent from his study sample shows customer's feedback and rating to the hotel "employee integrity level" (feedback from customers of those hotels), has shown there is a difference of USD250,000 in player annual income the hospitality industry. Even integrity is the most important aspect, but it is often neglected and does not get the attention it deserves, the benefits of integrity practice can arouse businesses and entrepreneurs to the forefront in producing various innovations in their business in particular. While confronting challenges whether they are ready or not they should face the concurrent reality and find other alternative ways to ensure their business viability, rather than stay in a comfortable cocoon. Therefore, these young entrepreneurs who have high integrity values are responsible not to compromise on any reckless action that will affect their businesses and becoming more aware of the supportive values is more important than ensuring their external images (managing impression) only. They are certainly not only show good results outwardly but how they work hard to gain those results. All actions and decisions taken are accompanied by effort and hard work, not just empty words, so the practice of integrity will benefit the business run continuously.

Young Entrepreneurs as Agent of Change

Active involvement of young people to venture into entrepreneurship is strongly supported by the government as one of the alternatives not only to reduce the unemployment rate but also as a catalyst for economic activity in the country. This can be proven by government

efforts in providing various courses and training for young entrepreneurs to further strengthen skills in the field of entrepreneurship. Plus, various business funds and loan funds were also created to encourage the involvement of young entrepreneurs in this field. However, their role in this entrepreneurship field does not stop as players in economic enablers but their role should be expended as a role model and agent in dynamic entrepreneurial landscape shaping and integrity to change the leakages that occur in today's private sector.

One of the leaks in a culture of integrity is rampant corruption and becoming an incurable disease. Every day, we are presented with news about corrupt activities by both civil servants and even worse among entrepreneurs and businessmen. According to the Malaysian Anti -Corruption Commission (MACC) portal, "corruption activities in the public and private sectors contribute to a government's failure in providing facilities to the country and become an obstacle in security and the developing environment; business dynamics; and cause the fabric to deteriorate in society itself.", Clearly proves that corrupt activities among entrepreneurs and traders (private sector) are a threat not only to the formation of a society with integrity but also has a profound social and economic impact. Besides, according to the MACC portal throughout monetary arrangements "the estimates were made by various international bodies and organizations, but the cost of corruption at USD1 trillion globally. It is the short amount of time that can eradicate poverty all over the world. In addition, the World Bank Group estimates that the corruption segment in the private sector alone in developing countries reaches a level of USD500 billion* at least ". These clearly show the role of the private sector i.e. business and entrepreneurship is important to ensure not only economic well-being but also the foundation of integrity to dynamic national development.

(*According to the *Transparency International UK*, at least USD500 billion losses are estimated in developing countries in health services related to corrupt activities, which can result in deaths and hinder efforts to tackle infectious diseases and pandemics such as HIV / Covid-19).

Tracing the role of young people as citizens, students, consumers, workers, as well as the majority of voters in our country, this group is an important segment of society in leading the country, towards cultivating a society with integrity. Therefore, it is important to formulate policies that ensure the engagement of young people avoiding the risk of involvement in corrupt activities, and non-compliance with other integrity practices can be curbed and then overcome from the beginning. Words by Saidina Ali r.a: "If you want to see the future of a country, and then look at their today youth." clearly shows young entrepreneurs play an important role as a driver towards positive change and also as a key player in innovating integrity practices in the businesses they venture. Together with the government machinery in ensuring the practice of a culture of integrity by being embodied into a transparent, trustworthy, and responsible business.

In addition to ensuring sustainability in business and earning targeted returns, these young entrepreneurs with integrity certainly provide quality products or services and meet the criteria as offered to consumers. This prospect has shown these young entrepreneurs with integrity are important agents in society in tackling corrupt activities, so appropriate policies, and awareness must be carefully designed to ensure they understand the importance of their role to succeed in such noble endeavors. Besides, various initiatives provided by the government in elevating the role of young entrepreneurs and their active involvement. They

need to be more actively urged to use the opportunities provided by the government to be agents of change that build a dynamic economic landscape in the era of economic and social structural recovery in this country. This is clearly can be seen in their stance about the current situation related to the role and involvement of young people in entrepreneurship over the years, and also the existing evidence on their readiness to be key drivers in economic, social, and political transformation in Malaysia.

Continued efforts of these young entrepreneurs in strengthening their involvement by participating in the country's economic landscape are important. Especially in assisting the government in creating a more inclusive and comprehensive economic agenda and facing the challenges during pandemics and global economic recession period. Many young entrepreneurs have successfully showcased their ability to become entrepreneurs, even owners of great leading conglomerates. Their role as the forerunner of grassroots mobilization, young entrepreneurs have contributed positively to change and showcased their ability to bring new competitive and innovative ideas, solutions for more sustainable economic growth, and contributed to the nation's prosperity along with continuous efforts in implementing integrity concept in their existing business.

Apart from that, the leadership of young entrepreneurs should be offered as an alternative to solve some of the economic crises that our country is going through at this time. By describing them as agents of change, this group has a spirit, progressive self-dynamics, is creative, innovative, and has a high idealism. Even though most of the youngsters, including young entrepreneurs, are still not contaminated with political ideology will help provide a different and independent (apolitical) point of view to chart a new landscape in the country's economic growth. However, to increase knowledge and skill in entrepreneurship they should have early exposure to entrepreneurs such as creating or generating business ideas, managing business sources and finances handling, and also planning skills on developing a business canvas (Fardaniah, 2018). Government efforts drive the framework of the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030 (DKN2030) - Malaysia's Best Entrepreneurship Nation 2030 has shown the importance of existing collective cooperation between the government and all stakeholders such as young entrepreneurs so the implementation of the strategies and initiatives outlined under DKN2030 will have an impact on the entrepreneurial built up ecosystem. Overall entrepreneurial community including young entrepreneurs must start to mobilize their energy to build up an ideal entrepreneurial ecosystem and underpin the cores of DKN2030 needs, so all the entrepreneurial activities implemented lead to an environment that produces successful and progressive entrepreneurs with integrity.

The application of integrity, accountability, transparency, and skills needs to be embodied in every business activity, as well as throughout the business value chain process of these young entrepreneurs. This process will ensure the continuity of the business conducted because the principles of integrity practiced by these young entrepreneurs meet the eight (8) aspects in the basic principles of consumer rights such as rights in basic necessities, safety, information, to choose, to be represented, to redress, consumer education, and the right to a healthy environment (Ibarra & Revilla, 2014). Therefore, the indirect ethics and integrity practiced by young entrepreneurs will reflect their identity in running integrity and responsible business. Various efforts have been undertaken by the government in collaboration with various agencies and at all levels, and continue implemented to strengthen the inculcation of integrity

among young entrepreneurs including financial assistance programs in the form of grants and skills courses. The strong support of these young entrepreneurs is believed to help to successfully strengthen their identity, especially the value of integrity, and further continue the excellence and continuity of their business or enterprise. In addition, the responsibility of an entrepreneur who provides services and products that meet the aspects as offered is important in providing the best services and products to customers. In this regard, young entrepreneurs must have the knowledge, skills, and noble values including accountability and integrity to ensure their goal in delivering excellent services or products to the public towards customers will be achieved. On an ongoing basis, the government also needs to take a more comprehensive approach so that continuous and collective efforts can be designed to stimulate as well as monitor activities to strengthen the value of entrepreneurial integrity among young entrepreneurs in the country.

Conclusion

Young entrepreneurs should seize this open opportunity to prove their generation's maturity, stand firm to prove how they can be the driving force behind the country's economic growth, and together create a society with equal opportunities to achieve socio-economic growth in Malaysia. In addition, young Malaysian entrepreneurs need to work hard, continue to prove their driving capability in innovation and economic growth, and bring positive change to society through their progressive agenda for a developed and caring Malaysia. According to the words of YAB Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Mahathir Mohamad at the launch of DKN2030, "Through the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030, the government has formulated a strategy to nurture young people to become entrepreneurs. So we hope to inculcate an entrepreneurial culture with the goal of contributing up to 50 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2030". This ongoing effort from the government has young entrepreneurs with integrity they should stay united as a thinker and leaders of change and transformation to achieve sustainability in businesses. At the same time, they also need to intensify the application and cultivating of the practice of noble values in entrepreneurship. Each of them needs to work together as a team, avoid silo culture, strengthen their identity and practice and continue the culture of entrepreneurship with integrity. Tun Mahathir also in his speech further stressed "With this policy, we intend to create an entrepreneurial culture that encourages entrepreneurs to become job creators and provide guidance to those who work in their respective industries."

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