



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/15073>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/15073

**Received:** 13 July 2022, **Revised:** 18 August 2022, **Accepted:** 29 August 2022

**Published Online:** 16 September 2022

**In-Text Citation:** (Halim et al., 2022)

**To Cite this Article:** Halim, I. bin A., Lateh, A. T. bin A., Ahmad, N. A. binti, & Zaid, E. S. binti M. (2022). Human Development from The Perspective of Contemporary Interpretation. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(9), 1693 – 1700.

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Vol. 12, No. 9, 2022, Pg. 1693 – 1700

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[www.hrmar.com](http://www.hrmar.com)

ISSN: 2222-6990

## Human Development from The Perspective of Contemporary Interpretation

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### Abstract

Human development according to Islam needs to refer to the Qur'an which is the absolute source and must be used as the main reference to develop a person to be of commendable character and beneficial to the surrounding community. The content of the verses of the Quran itself has ways of educating people towards becoming useful people. However, the Qur'an does not specifically mention the effort to develop a perfect human being. The objective of this study is to identify and analyze selected verses of the Quran related to spiritual development. Therefore, the contemporary tafsir that is al-Misbah interpretation will be used to explain the verses of the Quran related to human development. In summary, human development according to the Qur'an needs to function based on the two main roles of man, namely as a servant of God and a caliph on this earth.

### Introduction

Development is literally about development, development process, efforts or development activities (Bahasa, 2001). Development generally involves the process or effort of developing something whether physical or spiritual. While the term human (*ins*, *nas*, *unas*) is the term of the Qur'an and it refers to a comprehensive and integrated human being. The word *insan* is taken from the word *uns* which means tame, harmonious and visible. The word *nasiya* which means forget and word *nasa-yanusu* which means shaking (Syukri, 1987).

Human development according to Islam must involve two important aspects of human life which are spiritual development and semi-integrated material development. This balanced and integrated development is an important factor for the survival of Muslims nowadays whether physical or mental or thought. What is more frightening is the attack of thought which rains down on Muslims from various angles. In short, great challenges from the enemies of Islam can be seen throughout the period of Islamic development (Zarrina, 2004).

Therefore, it is one of the obligations of Muslims to think of measures to prevent Muslims from continuing to be forgetful and negligent in their lives, especially the young

generation who will inherit the country in the future. In an effort to achieve the goal of building commendable morals, Islamic value must be instilled in the souls of Muslims.

Moreover, the process of creating a person who always adheres to al-Quran and al-Sunnah needs to be started from the internal aspect of that person through the references brought by the Prophet SAW. Ummah development requires *tazkiyah al-nafs* (self-purification) which is one of the tasks of the apostleship. This cleansing refers to the spiritual aspect, which is that in principle, spiritual elements are the nature of human beings and give the characteristics of greatness and superiority of humans compared to other creatures created by God (Stapa, 2004). That superiority can be proven when commendable morals can be applied in the person in addition to making the spiritual aspect one of the main elements to develop the person himself.

In addition, human development is one of the main elements of Islamic development. Furthermore, the concept of human development according to Islam itself is unique because it includes physical and spiritual aspects. This is because Islam emphasizes the reward that will be received in the afterlife rather than in this world. The Tafsir Quran is one of the branches of knowledge and has a great contribution in developing the human aspect of a Muslim. This is clear by looking at the contributions of classical and contemporary tafsir scholars who contribute and present their own approaches in order to benefit society. This includes classical tafsir scholars, namely Ibn Kathir through his excellent work Tafsir Ibn Kathir and M. Quraish Shihab through his work Tafsir al-Misbah.

### **Research Methodology**

Research methods in this study are divided into two part. The first part is the data collection method and the second part is the data analysis method. This research method takes the form of a qualitative study with a text study design. Next to the data analysis method, this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is often defined as research that does not involve numbers or statistics (McLeod, 1997). Through qualitative research, researchers make direct research on the study material and seek to gain a deep understanding of it as well as translate and interpret the data collected (Noraini, 2001). This study will understand and describe the verses of the Quran that can be linked to human development.

### **Background of The Tafsir Al-Misbah**

This interpretation is one of the most famous and complete work. The author, Muhammad Quraish Shihab is a famous commentator who pioneered the interpretation of *Maudu'iy* (theme). He is a tafsir expert and holds a doctorate in Quranic sciences from al-Azhar University. His expertise was proven when he produced a complete Tafsir al-Quran which is Tafsir al-Misbah. Among his other works related to the interpretation of *Maudu'iy* is Insight of the al-Quran: Tafsir Maudu'iy on various issues of the people. His stature was recognized by the Department of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (Shihab, 1996). The reference to this interpretation is also to get a more recent perspective in the context of the interpretation of related verses of the Qur'an.

This Tafsir is a complete interpretation of the 30 Juzuk al-Quran. This interpretation has 15 volumes in total and was produced when M. Quraish Shihab was the Indonesian ambassador to Egypt during the reign of President B.J Habibie in 1999. This commentary was written on Friday, 4 Rabi'ul Awal 1420H corresponding to 18 June 1999 AD and finished on 8 Rajab 1423H corresponding to 5 September 2003 AD. This interpretation also refers to several

books such as Tafsir al-Muntakhab and Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Quran in explaining the verses of the Quran. The factor that prompted M. Quraish Shihab to compose this tafsir is because there is no more recent tafsir in the archipelago after al-Azhar tafsir composed by Professor Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (HAMKA) in 1979. Therefore he decided to write this tafsir in addition to having a lot of time and space when he was the Indonesian ambassador in Egypt at that time (Najib & Khairuddin, 2011).

Next, this method of interpretation is written using a mixture of Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur and Tafsir bi al-Ra'yi but the interpretation using common sense is also seen to be quite extensive when compared to Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur. Nevertheless, in conclusion, this tafsir is categorized as a tafsir that uses the theme method.

### **Approach to Tafsir Al-Misbah**

Next this tafsir was written using a combination of Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur and Tafsir bi al-Ra'yi but the interpretation using reason is seen to be more extensive when compared to Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur. This interpretation also uses the theme method or al-Mawdu'iy.

Al-Tafsir al-Mawdu'iy in terms refers to knowledge that studies problems according to the will or purpose (maqasid) of the Qur'an by collecting verses of the Qur'an based on a surah or various surahs through a theme (Mustafa Muslim, n.d.). This interpretation is also a method that gathers the verses of the Qur'an related to a certain title according to the position of the Qur'an or collections of surahs. Next will be collected a title or theme related to an element that is interconnected with each other (Abdul al-Astar, 1991). This method discusses a problem topic and organizes it based on the chronology and the reasons for the revelation of the verses. Through this method, the commentator examines the verses from every angle and performs an analysis to explain the basis of the problem so that it can be understood easily (Rohimin, 2007). This method of thematic interpretation can be categorized as the latest approach in the field of interpretation. This is because the field of interpretation has been dominated by interpretation based on analysis (Shaharom, 1997).

This method of al-Mawdu'iy interpretation can be divided into two forms. The first form is the interpretation that debates one surah of the Qur'an comprehensively by introducing and explaining the general meanings and in particular in outline by connecting a verse with another verse or between one basic problem with another basic problem. Through this method of discussion or interpretation, the surah appears organized, meticulous and perfect. According to M. Quraish Shihab, usually the content of a surah is indicated by the name of the surah as long as the name is sourced from the Prophet SAW (Shihab, 2001). This method has actually been done for the first time by classical tafsir scholars such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. However, after that some other scholars of tafsir introduced this method.

Next, the second form is an interpretation that brings together and arranges the verses of the Qur'an that have same purpose and theme, then explanations and conclusions are given under a specific theme debate. Through this kind of study, commentators try to establish the views of the Qur'an that refer to specific themes from various forms of themes related to nature and life. The ability to relate one verse to another allows commentators to make comprehensive conclusions about certain problems according to the Qur'an's point of view. Furthermore, through this method it also gives the commentators the opportunity to ask the questions that come to their mind and then turn them into themes that will be discussed for the purpose of finding the Qur'an's view on the matter. Among the reasons that encourage the existence of this second method is the development of various fields of

knowledge with complex questions that require guidance from the Qur'an (Quraish Shihab, 2001). For the record, Al-Tafsir al-Mawdu'iy as a more specific interpretation method was officially introduced by Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Kumi who is the head of the interpretation department at al-Azhar University (Shihab et al., 2001).

### **Selected Verses Related To Human Development**

Human development according to the Qur'an needs to function on two main roles, humans as servants of Allah SWT and humans as caliphs on this earth. These two main roles need to be based on tauhid. As a servant of God, humans need to worship God SWT who created them and carry out all the commands and stay away from His prohibitions. While in carrying out the trust as the caliph of God, humans play a role in developing, prospering and managing this natural resource. The combination of these two main functions of human creation is the human essence that functions in human development.

However, this role as a caliph need to be based on the main tenet of monotheism so that this trust is not deviated from the path outlined by Allah SWT. The word 'aqeedah in its plural form 'aqāid (عقائد) also means what is related to belief and does not include aspects of practice. There are several opinions about the definition of faith. In other words, belief refer to a person's belief about the existence of Allah SWT and also the Messenger which is prophet Muhammad. Aqidah is also an ultimate and absolute belief in the existence of Allah SWT by believing in sin and reward, heaven and hell and others. Besides that, it includes the truth about faith in Allah, angels, books, messengers, the Day of Resurrection and also qada' and qadar. Aqidah in terms also means to believe in certain facts such as absolute faith and not having a feeling of doubt. The creed is faith because it is related to the belief in a person's heart (Aqil, 1993). The following is a discussion of the verses of the Qur'an related to the caliph, servant of God and monotheism:

Surah Al-Dhariyat: 56

*And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me*

M. Quraish Shihab in interpreting the verse above has emphasized the word 'worship'. In explaining this word, he quoted the view of Sheikh Muhammad Abduh who said that worship is not just obedience, but it reaches peak and the effect will be greatness in the soul of a person towards Allah SWT. In addition, it is also a proof of a servant who devotes himself to his master who has power, especially Allah SWT. The duty of the caliph is also included in basic worship. The first is related to self-servitude to Allah SWT in every human being and the second refer to worship directed to Allah with every movement of the conscience, limbs and movement in life (Shihab, 2009).

Surah Al-Baqarah: 30

*Remember when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place a successive (human) authority on earth." They asked (Allah), "Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?" Allah responded, "I know what you do not know"*

Next, in interpreting the Quranic verse above, the contemporary tafsir scholar M. Quraish Shihab emphasized the word 'caliphate'. He has defined the caliphate as replacing or



coming after whoever came before. Giving the task of caliphate to humans is a privilege given by Allah SWT as a form of test and respect for humans. Handing over the duties or roles of this caliph to humans is appropriate and in line with the guidance of Allah SWT. It is also one of the proofs of wisdom that God has bestowed upon mankind (Quraish Shihab, 2009).

Surah Al-An'am: 165

*And He it is Who has made you successors in the earth and raised some of you above others by degrees, that He might try you by what He has given you. Surely your Lord is quick to requite and He is most surely the Oft-Forgiving (the One Who changes evil deeds into rewards), Most Merciful (the One Who sends down the light of Mercy).*

The verse above is also related to the duty of humans to be rulers on this earth from one generation to another and from time to time. Next, God has given different positions between fellow human beings whether in terms of sustenance, morals, goodness, badness and appearance. God's gift to mankind has its own wisdom. Among them is to see the level of faith and sense of responsibility as well and the level of gratitude for this blessing.

In the verse above, M. Quraish Shihab once again emphasizes the word 'caliphate' in his interpretation. He cited the views of al-Sya'rawi who defined the caliph as a successor. According to him, the term replacement refers to the replacement of fellow beings in this life. It also refers to the duty of this caliph to replace God in upholding will and implementing His decrees. In addition, this role also includes the task of prospering the earth in accordance with the command of Allah SWT. However, this succession does not mean that God is incapable of governing this world, but one of the honors and privileges that given to humans (Quraish Shihab, 2009). This is in accordance with the role of the human who acts as a servant who needs to obey his creator.

Surah Al-An'am: 101

*(He is) the Originator of the heavens and earth. How could He have children when He has no mate? He created all things and has 'perfect' knowledge of everything.*

M. Quraish Shihab interprets the verse above by describing the abilities possessed by Allah SWT. He emphasized the word *بدیع*. It means starting something without any precedent. This meaning revolves around the existence of God who has no beginning. God's ability cannot be matched by his creatures. That shows Allah SWT does not need the help of anyone and there is no creature that resembles Allah. M. Quraish Shihab also quotes the view of Imam al-Ghazali who refers to the word *بدیع* as the essence, nature and actions of Allah SWT are absolute and do not equal creatures at all (Shihab, 2009).

Surah Al-An'am: 102-103

*That is Allah, your Lord; there is no deity except Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him. And He is Disposer of all things.*

*Sense of seeing can not comprehend Him. And He comprehends the sense of seeing. And He is Al-Latîf (the Most Subtle and Courteous), Well-Acquainted with all things.*

According to tafsir al-Misbah, M. Quraish Shihab has focused on the term proxy. It refers to Allah who is able and powerful to do something. Allah SWT has a noble nature and must be worshipped. Allah SWT does not require worship and devotion to creatures because His is the one who takes care the creatures. Worshiping Allah SWT is one of the proofs of belief in the existence of God, which is without associating Allah SWT with other creatures. Therefore, every worship is obligatory only to Allah SWT who has arranged everything (Shihab, 2009).

### Conclusion

Human development is one of the most important elements to focus on in life. The basis of this human development has been recorded by Allah in the Quran and Muslims need to refer to it to find the right foundation. Although the Qur'an does not mention in detail the ways or steps to develop a person perfectly, but these verses of the Qur'an are able to provide a basis for this process. Furthermore, Islamic scholars strive to study these verses in the field of interpretation of the Qur'an and subsequently produce books of interpretation including the book Tafsir al-Misbah as discussed. It can be concluded from the discussion above that human development according to the Qur'an needs to function based on the two main roles of man which are as a servant of God and also as a caliph on earth. Both of these need to be based on monotheism. Although the Qur'an was revealed more than 1400 years ago, the field of interpreting the Qur'an continues to grow until now. This development occurs because the passage of time requires interpretation to be done in accordance with the times without changing the principles outlined in the Qur'an.

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