

Punctuality in The Light of Prophetic Guidance

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Abstract

Punctuality is a positive and significant trait according to Islam. When examined, most of the acts of worship prescribed for Muslims such as prayers, zakat and hajj are tied to specific time periods. Failure to adhere to the stipulated time period will only result in the rejection of the act of worship in the eyes of Allah SWT. This explains the attachment of a Muslim's worship to a period that must be obeyed. Unfortunately, this practical adherence to time in worship is not practiced by some Muslims in worldly matters such as work and study. The more troubling thing is that this attitude of disobeying time has blossomed into the culture of some Muslim communities and remains a bad identity that is inherited. The objective of this article is to clarify the guidance and recommendations of the Prophet ﷺ regarding punctuality in the daily life of a Muslim. The result of the study found that there are various hadith-reports that present indirect signals towards the importance of punctuality and the impact of neglecting it in the society. This study is expected to raise the awareness of the Muslim community in particular to emulate the Prophet ﷺ in terms of respecting and observing time.

Keywords: Punctuality, Prophet, Hadith, Islam, Guidance

Introduction

Time is an invaluable blessing that Allah SWT has bestowed on humans. Islam is seen as a religion that places great emphasis on the issue of time preservation. This can be seen through the attachment of most of the recommended acts of worship to a predetermined period of time (Ibrahim, 2018). For example, the fard prayer must be performed within a certain time frame as Allah SWT says: "Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times" (Quran 4:103). The worship of zakat is also bound by a certain maturity period referred to as "hawl", i.e. even a year of property ownership. The Prophet said: "There is no Zakat on wealth until Hawl (one year) has passed" (Ibn Majah, 2014). The Hajj also as is commonly known is only valid to be performed during the months of Hajj only. Although these acts of worship expose the importance of observing the time that can determine the acceptance or rejection of an individual Muslim's worship, the matter of respecting this time seems difficult to be applied by most Muslims. Valuable time is often wasted and not given much importance in worldly affairs at the level of individuals and organizations. Some Muslim administrators who are responsible for managing certain organizations are seen as unable to comply and manage time properly, resulting in a decrease in the quality of work produced (Islam et al., 2014). According to Attahiru (2021), this symptom of alienating the discipline of time between worship and worldly affairs is rooted in the psyche of most Muslims due to the long colonization factor in some Islamic countries. This has led to a separation between the appreciation of Islam in worship and matters other than worship among Muslims.

The attitude of obeying and respecting time is an exposure to good morals that are closely related to the matter of trust and keeping promises. Islam has set the demands of being trustworthy on every individual Muslim both in his relationship with Allah SWT, as well as his relationship with other human beings (Ali, 2017). Allah SWT said: "O you who believe Fulfill (your) obligations" (Quran 5:1). According to Ibn Kathir (2015), a good Muslim will not break promises and betray the trust of their fellow man. This includes in financial matters, secrets and agreements among themselves (Al-Sa'di, 2014). Thus, any form of promise and agreement is a trust that must be kept and repaid properly (Al-Qurtubi, 2013). In addition, the Prophet ﷺ also often emphasized the importance of being trustworthy and keeping promises. His Majesty ﷺ characterized the attitude of not being trustworthy as one of the signs of one's hypocrisy. He said: "The signs of a hypocrite are three: Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie; and whenever he promises, he breaks his promise; and whenever he is entrusted, he betrays" (Al-Bukhari, 2001; Muslim, 2012). Unfortunately, many Muslims have failed to put into practice the recommendation to be trustworthy as described in these two primary sources of Islamic law. Most Islamic countries are still recorded as among the countries that have reported high levels of corruption and money laundering, in addition to less human security (Ibrahim, 2018). Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia are also still plagued with time management problems and a deplorable level of discipline. In fact, it is rooted in the identity of the society that is inherited from one generation to another (Amir, 2014).

On the other hand, even though the Quran and hadith are full of this message, Muslims are still not the first group of people to discuss about the ethics and good norms that should be internalized and practiced. Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) for example, only emerged a short time after Protestant Work Ethics (PWE) was initiated. IWE began to be discussed holistically as a response to PWE which was seen to claim that economic progress could only be achieved through living up to the ethical values they promoted (Ibrahim, 2018). According to Noer (2022), Islamic Work Ethics includes six main elements, namely Al-Shalah (compatible, useful and good), Al-Itqan (perfection and stability), Al-Ihsan (do the best and even better), Al-

Mujahadah (optimal hard work), Tanafus and Ta'awun (challenge and assistance) and observing the value of time. Ibrahim (2018) also believes that Islamic Work Ethics includes eight main dimensions, namely religiousness, effort, competition, work obligation, quality, equality, collectivity, and benefit. The value of punctuality is emphasized and included as one of the main values under the work obligation dimension. In short, punctuality is among the main principles presented in Islamic ethics. Punctuality refers to an ability to fulfill a required task or complete an obligation before or at the set time. It can also refer to respecting the time of others (Shah, 2017).

This article is written with the aim of uncovering the Prophet's guidelines and recommendations regarding punctuality in the daily life of a Muslim. This study is expected to raise the awareness of the Muslim community in particular, to emulate the Prophet ﷺ in terms of obeying and respecting time. This discussion on punctuality also proves that Islam has been ahead of the western societies in discussing issues related to ethics and good governance. This is also a major inspiration for all Muslims to be more visible than other communities in displaying good manners and ethics in daily life especially while working and offering any kind of public services. Every individual Muslim who lives up to every recommendation of the Prophet SAW regarding punctuality has certainly succeeded in becoming the best role model in exposing the true quality founded by Islam, then attracting more non-Muslims to the religion of Islam.

Punctuality In The Quran

In several verses, time has been mentioned. For instance clearly in surah al-Asr "By time. Indeed, mankind is in loss. Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience" (Quran 103: 1-3). Ibn Kathir (1999) states at any period that consist son of Adam's actions (good or bad), which indicates mankind is at loss and destruction. He then made an exception for mankind whom omits from loss are the ones that believed in Allah with their hearts, design their limbs with good deeds by performing obedience and abandoning forbidden. Allah swt says "Respond to your Lord before the coming of a Day from Allah that cannot be averted. There will be no refuge for you then, nor grounds for denial of sins" (Quran 42:47) which indicates that time needs to be utilized wisely in this Dunya before the Day comes.

According to Rafikul (2022) time has been manifested in various expressions, one of them is time related to acts of worship for instance act of prayers, Allah swt mentions "Observe the prayer from the decline of the sun until the darkness of the night and the dawn prayer, for certainly the dawn prayer is witnessed by angels" (Quran 17:78), and act of fasting, Allah swt mentions "Ramadan is the month in which the Quran was revealed as a guide for humanity with clear proofs of guidance and the decisive authority. So whoever is present this month, let them fast.." (Quran 2:185), and act of pilgrimage, Allah swt mentions "Commitment to pilgrimage is made in appointed months. Whoever commits to performing pilgrimage, let them stay away from intimate relations, foul language, and arguments during pilgrimage.." (Quran 2:197).

To further illustrate the importance of time in the holy Quran, Allah swt swears by it in beginning of many Surah, for example night, evening, dawn, morning sunlight. For example: "By the night when it covers, and the day when it shines" (Quran 92:1-2), "By the dawn, and the ten nights"(Quran 89:1-2), "By the morning sunlight, and the night when it falls still"(Quran 93:1-2).

Specifically Maghfirah (forgiveness), Allah swt mentions "And hasten towards forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those mindful of Allah swt"(Quran 3:133). Al-Sya'rawi (1993) describes to quickly attain forgiveness and paradise as you do not know how long you will remain in this world. Be wary of postponing any act of obedience or delaying good deeds because you would not be sure to have the luxurious time and opportunity to perform it, so seize the opportunity when it comes.

Al-Sya'rawi (1993) illuminates that mankind's luxurious option ends upon death, a person becomes oppressed and not privileged. He has nothing for himself and could not say "I will not die now". His self-control is over, even his organs bear witness to him. Where as in this Dunya, each one of us chooses the direction to which he is heading, one chooses disbelief, the other chooses faith, one chooses obedience, the other chooses disobedience. Whomever chooses good deeds (with Allah's guidance), it is as if he was racing towards them. Why? Because he does not know when he will die, and therefore whenever he races to do good, it is good deed that is added to his credits and rewards. Based on the mention of Allah swt "Everyone turns to their own direction of prayer. So compete with one another in doing good. Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together for judgement. Surely Allah is Most Capable of everything"(Quran 2:148). What is required of believers in this worldly life is to compete in good deeds before the time comes, and not one thinks that he would escape from Allah SWT as mentioned in the verse earlier, and He mentions: "Beware of the Day We will blow the mountains away, and you will see the earth laid bare. And We will gather all humankind, leaving none behind (Quran 19:47), and "So proclaim, O Prophet: Flee to Allah! I am truly sent by Him with a clear warning to you"(Quran 51:50).

Punctuality In The Prophetic Hadiths

Appreciating time is among the basic instructions presented by the Prophet ﷺ in his hadiths. Prophet ﷺ emphasized that time is one of the blessings that is often wasted by humans. The Prophet said: "There are two blessings that many people are deceived into losing: health and free time." (Al-Bukhari, 2001). According to al-Tibi (1970), the Prophet ﷺ compared humans to a trader who has trading capital. He tried to get a profit without tracing the capital with full trust so that his business did not lose. Likewise, humans, in fact, free time and health are capital for him. Thus, he should utilize the capital by way of faith and good deeds to gain profit and goodness in this world and the hereafter.

In another hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ described human affairs on the Day of Judgment through his words: "The feet of the son of Adam shall not move from before his Lord on the Day of Judgement, until he is asked about five things: About his life and what he did with it, about his youth and what he wore it out in, about his wealth and how he earned it, and spent it upon, and what he did with what he knew." (al-Tirmidhi, 1975). This hadith clearly explains that people will be questioned on the Day of Judgment regarding the management of their time while in the world. Therefore, a Muslim who has faith and piety, in other words, has high spiritual intelligence, should reveal a responsible and wise attitude to manage time well (Baharuddin et al., 2015). This is completely contradictory to the attitude of disobeying time and liking to procrastinate. Individuals who do not obey the time have essentially shown an attitude of disrespect for the time granted, then signaled a form of denial of the instructions of the Prophet Muhammad in his hadiths.

In addition, this attitude of punctuality is also related to the element of professionalism which is highly emphasized especially in Islamic work ethics. If internalized, an individual who adheres to Islamic work ethics will act obsessively towards punctuality and will not allow his

time to pass without being utilized (Nurdin, 2020). In a hadith narrated by Jarir RA, the Prophet ﷺ emphasized that his people should give alms immediately before they are prevented from being able to give alms (Al-Suyuti, n.d). This direction clearly explains the importance of working on the benefits of time and opportunities that exist before it leaves us.

Furthermore, the attitude of punctuality is an act that is very closely related to keeping promises and not breaking them. A good Muslim will not at all allow a promise that has been sealed to be betrayed just like that. The Prophet said: "There are four characteristics, whoever has them all is a pure hypocrite, and whoever has one of its characteristics, he has one of the characteristics of hypocrisy, until he gives it up: When he speaks he lies, when he makes a covenant he betrays it, when he makes a promise he breaks it, and when he disputes he resorts to obscene speech." (Al-Bukhari, 2001; Muslim, 2012) An individual Muslim who disobeys the time period is in fact betraying the covenant and decree of the time period that has been sealed. This attitude is an ugly form of hypocrisy that should not be emulated by a Muslim. In fact, it will result in the wrath of Allah SWT and the individual will get a shameful sign on the Day of Judgment (Abdullahi, 2020). The Prophet said: "There will be for every perfidious person on the Day of Judgment a flag by which he will be recognized. It will be announced: Here is the breach of faith of so and so" (Al-Bukhari, 2001; Muslim, 2012)

On the other hand, in the Prophet's encouragement for every Muslim to be punctual and respecting time, he often explained the importance of organizing planning in every act of life to ensure that every moment of a Muslim's time was not wasted. According to Berisha & Ismail (2018), Rasulullah ﷺ was a leader who managed to apply the four contemporary management functions initiated by contemporary scholars, namely planning, organizing, leading and controlling. Therefore, it is not surprising that various hadiths describe his encouragement for Muslims to always plan and not waste the time that is given. In a hadith, the Prophet said: "Race to do works against seven. Are you waiting but for overwhelming poverty, or distracting richness, or debilitating illness, or babbling senility, or sudden death, or the Dajjal, so that hidden evil is what is awaited, or the Hour? The Hour is more calamitous and more bitter." Al-Tirmidhi (1975) According to Al-Shan'ani (2011), this hadith is an encouragement to start practicing before old age and seize the benefits of time before being hit by any crisis.

Ibn 'Abbas RA also narrated a hadith, that the Prophet said: "Seize five before five: your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before your preoccupation, and your life before your death." Ibn Abi Syaibah (2015) This hadith is further confirmed by the fact that 'Abdullah bin 'Umar RA often expressed: "If you survive till the evening, do not expect to be alive in the morning, and if you survive till the morning, do not expect to be alive in the evening, and take from your health for your sickness, and (take) from your life for your death." Al-Bukhari (2001) All these facts reveal the Prophet's encouragement for every Muslim to produce a neat plan in his life, in addition to maximizing the use of life time and always being punctual. Al-Qastalani (1905) said: "So, the wise person, when evening comes, does not wait for the morning, and when morning comes, does not wait for the evening. Instead, they think that their appointed time may come before that, so they engage in actions that will bring them benefit after their death. They seize the days of their health with righteous deeds because illness may strike and prevent them from doing good deeds. Such a person fears that they may reach the appointed time without sufficient provisions. Whoever does not seize the opportunity will regret it."

Moreover, the attitude of disobeying time illustrates the indifference of an individual that contradicts the noble traits described by the Prophet Muhammad. In several hadiths, the Prophet emphasized the importance of completing all work and demands with dedication and earnestness. Among them, the Prophet said: "Indeed, Allah SWT loves that when one of you does a deed, they do it with excellence" (Al-Awsat, 1995). A person who is dedicated and skillful in his life will definitely not abuse the appointed time. He will definitely be present early or right at the agreed time so that each of his assignments can be completed perfectly in the optimum time (Shah, 2017). In addition, punctuality is also one of the characteristics of individuals who respect others and are selfless (Tasbih & Hafid, 2023).

Impacts Of Neglecting Punctuality According To Prophetic Guidance

Neglecting punctuality causes the following negativities according to prophetic guidance:

1. Stress due to improper planning and time management:

Lack of proper planning and time management causes a lot of stress that may result in failure in all aspects. For this reason, the Prophet warned some of his companions of engaging in some acts of worship without proper planning of their time which may result in stress (Abdullahi, 2020).

'Aishah RA narrated: A woman from the tribe of Bani Asad was sitting with me and Allah's Apostle (ﷺ) came to my house and said, "Who is this?" I said, (She is) so and so. She does not sleep at night because she is engaged in prayer. The Prophet (ﷺ) said disapprovingly: "Do (good) deeds which is within your capacity as Allah never gets tired of giving rewards till you get tired of doing good deeds" (Al-Bukhari, 2001)

This hadith shows that the Prophet disliked excessive rigor in worship out of fear of weariness and boredom. He dislikes excessive devotion, lest one becomes overwhelmed by it and feels burdened, as if retracting from the effort exerted for the sake of Allah and done voluntarily (Ibn Baṭṭāl, 2003).

In another hadith, the Prophet recommends sleeping than observing supererogatory act of prayers for whosoever is feeling sleepy (Abdullahi, 2020):

Anas bin Malik RA narrated: Once the Prophet (ﷺ) entered the Mosque and saw a rope hanging in between its two pillars. He said, "What is this rope?" The people said, This rope is for Zainab who, when she feels tired, holds it (to keep standing for the prayer.) The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Don't use it. Remove the rope. You should pray as long as you feel active, and when you get tired, sit down." (Al-Bukhari, 2001)

In this hadith, there is evidence that a person should not delve too deeply or burden themselves excessively in worship, nor undertake what they cannot bear. Instead, they should pray as long as they are energetic. When tired, they should rest and sleep. Because if they pray while exhausted, their mind becomes distracted, weary, and fatigued, and they may come to dislike worship. They might even inadvertently curse themselves when they intend to supplicate (al-'Uthaymin, 2006).

2. Exposing oneself to dangers

Neglecting punctuality can also expose one to danger due to doing things in haste, such as road accidents as a result of doing things hastily. This is caused by not adhering to the time allotted for completing an assignment, and then being forced to complete it in a short period of time. This can be proven from Prophetic guidance, i.e. the incident that happened during the battle of Uhud Abdullahi (2020), as this hadith was narrated from various sources such as Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm.

This hadith shows that dispute and disagreement are the cause of ruin in this world and the Hereafter, because Allah SWT has mentioned in the Quran that dispute, which He decreed upon His servants, leads to destruction. Allah SWT has informed that with disagreement comes failure and laziness, allowing the enemy to prevail over the dissenters. They were all once united in defense, but when disagreement arose among them, some started to defend against others, thus enabling the enemy (Al-Muhallab, 2009).

It is unequivocal that, it is lack of punctuality that led these companions into this terrible situation, had it been they strictly adhered to the warnings of the prophet (S.A.W) they wouldn't have found themselves in that terrible situation (Abdullahi, 2020). Allah SWT vividly narrated the incidence in the Quran, Allah says:

“And Allah did indeed fulfil His Promise to you when you were killing them (your enemy) with His Permission; until (the moment) you lost your courage and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed after He showed you (of the booty) which you love. Among you are some that desire this world and some that desire the Hereafter. Then He made you flee from them (your enemy), that He might test you. But surely, He forgave you, and Allah is Most Gracious to the believers.(And remember) when you ran away (dreadfully) without even casting a side glance at anyone, and the Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) was in your rear calling you back. There did Allah give you one distress after another by way of requital to teach you not to grieve for that which had escaped you, nor for that which had befallen you. And Allah is Well-Aware of all that you do.” (Quran 3:152-153)

In these verses, the Quran explained that people in the past, like people in the present, lived in dreams and fantasies, waiting for victory as a pure divine gift for the believers, without fulfilling their duties or acting in accordance with the requirements of war against the enemy. They are charged by creation with jihad and carrying the trust. When they strive, endure, and remain steadfast, divine care supports them, and victory and success are achieved for them (al-Zuḥaylī, 1991).

3. Bringing misfortune to oneself, family and society

In the Quran, there is a verse that refers to humanity's hastiness, causing them to pray for harm upon themselves in moments of anger, just as they pray for good for themselves. Therefore, time should not be wasted on hurried matters. Allah SWT says in Surah al-Isra': The prayer that man should make for good, he maketh for evil; for man is given to hasty (deeds). (Quran 17:11)

The term 'hasty' refers to rushing in praying for oneself, one's children, and related matters. In this verse, al-Shanqiti (2005) refers to someone who prays for their own destruction or that of their child out of despair. For example, they may say, "O Allah, destroy me, or destroy my child." Thus, they pray for undesired harm, which they do not wish to be fulfilled. And the phrase "دُعَاءُهُ بِالْخَيْرِ" means they pray for evil just as they pray for good. So, when in despair, they say "O Allah, destroy my child" just as they say in other situations "O Allah, protect them," and so on. If Allah grants their prayer for harm, then destruction will occur.

This matter is also consistent with the hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah, where the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

The supplication of every one of you is granted if he does not grow impatient and says: I supplicated but it was not granted. (Al-Bukhari, 2001 & Muslim, 2012)

This Hadith, as discussed by Imam al-Nawawi (1929), emphasizes that a servant's prayer granted by Allah will not cease as long as the servant does not pray for sin or severing of family ties, and as long as they do not act hastily. Hastiness in this Hadith refers to a servant who prays, then their prayer is not granted, leading to disappointment, and eventually abandoning prayer.

Conclusion

Clearly, time is a very valuable blessing according to Islam. The Quran describes how Allah SWT has sworn by time as witnessed in various surahs and verses. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also through his hadiths emphasized on appreciating the blessings of time. Although the issue of punctuality is not stated directly and clearly in the hadith, the message of being trustworthy, keeping promises and being serious about carrying out the mandate provides a strong signal regarding the importance of punctuality which is often underestimated by some Muslims. Even the Prophet himself criticized the opposite actions such as being untrustworthy and breaking promises. The group that behaves this way is also labeled with negative titles such as hypocrite and promised a bad end on the day of the afterlife.

In addition, failure to comply with time will also result in various negative impacts in human daily life such as stress due to improper planning and time management, exposing oneself to dangers and bringing misfortune to oneself, family and society.

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