LEVEL OF DEVELOPING A NATION CONCEPT
BY COUNTRY DEVOTED TO GOD APPROACH

Norashibah Hj Besar, Ahmad Sunawari Long, Zaizul Ab Rahman*, Nozira Salleh and Nur Farhana Abdul Rahman

*Corresponding Author Centre of Aqidah and Global Peace, Faculty of Islamic Studies Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia 43600 Bangi, Selangor

ABSTRACT

The understanding of a ‘country devoted to God’ (Negara Zikir) in this study touches in five important aspects, such as knowledge, commanding the good and forbidding the evil (amar ma’ruf nahi munkar), as well as developing and protecting a country. Negara Zikir is a conceptual thought that aims to make Brunei Darussalam a developed nation oriented towards building memorable relations and human compliance with the blessings of the Creator based on Islamic governance, economics, and other aspects. The purpose of this study was to examine the level of understanding by the staff of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (KHEU) regarding the implementation of the Negara Zikir concept. This was a descriptive study that used questionnaires, which were distributed to 390 respondents who selected through the random sampling method. The descriptively analysis applied statistical methods that involved mean and standard deviation values. Overall, this study found that the respondents’ level of understanding was high. It is hoped that this study would be a reference for civil servants in Brunei in line with the wishes of His Royal Highness the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam who urged civil servants to become as the prime movers of Negara Zikir.

Keywords: Level of Developing A Nation, Negara Zikir, Religious Understanding, Nation Concept


1. INTRODUCTION

Implementing an Islamic Nation is a positive initiative and welcomed by Allah s.w.t. as well as supported by individuals and society. The understanding of a ‘country devoted to God’ (Negara Zikir) in this study touches in five important aspects, such as knowledge, commanding the good and forbidding the evil (amar ma’ruf nahi munkar), as well as developing and protecting a country. The understanding in this study refers to the
understanding by the staff of KHEU about the ‘country devoted to God’ concept and its characteristics as well as efforts to apply it in the community and adopting it in life in Negara Brunei Darussalam.

A culture of knowledge is one of the fundamentals of a civilised race. Individuals who seek knowledge should respect knowledge so as to obtain God’s blessings in ways such as, a) to establish an intent to seek knowledge sincerely because of mardhatillah in the afterlife; b) practice and disseminate learned knowledge; and c) abstain from vice and forbidden activities (al-Ghazali, 2010; Nasir Omar et al 2018; Zaizul Ab Rahman et al 2018). Islam has never rejected knowledge, rather it urges its subjects to search for knowledge and encourages the creation of a ‘scientific thinking mind’. Islam rejects an attitude that is taklid, of unquestionable compliance, static or having no principles or standing when receiving anything from previous generations (Faisal Othman 1997; al-Qardhawi 1996; Jaffary Awang et al 2017; Rafiza et al 2018; Mutsalim Khareng et al 2016). Islam has given the freedom to ijtihad (to the ulama), to make decisions regarding religious decrees and to understand religious evidence (nas) according to the scope required by the al-Quran and al-Sunnah.

Knowledge is able to influence the faith (iman) and acts of worship (ibadah) of a person. Individuals make decisions based on the mind (aqal) that is driven by knowledge and this would enable the individual to overcome all the challenges in this world and in the afterlife. The fundamentals of worship (ibadah) in the context of knowledge is the combination of its contents and basic integrity, which comprises the tenets of Islam, tenets of Faith (iman) and Excellence in Faith (ihsan) (Zaizul et al 2012, 2017). This is intended to form a Muslim personality leading to the creation of wants or wishes that form the beginning of an action (Surah Az-Zariyat: 56; Surah al-An'am, 165; dan Surah al-Kahfi, 103-105). The significance of knowledge is in the form of an important entity that creates an exemplary human capital. All aspects of life see humans racing to place themselves in a knowledge environment. Hence, progress in knowledge, science and technology is not calamitous for humans but rather an invaluable blessing for the wellbeing of their lives (Ahmad Sunawari Long et al 2017; Zaizul Ab Rahman et al 2018 and Salina Nen et al 2012).

Seeking knowledge has no limitations in the form of time, gender, geography, age etc. The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. exhorted, meaning: "Seek knowledge even if it takes you to China" (Riwayat al-Baihaqi). This call is in line with the ‘democratization of education’ and ‘life-long learning’ (PSH), which is discussed in the world of modern education. Islam is of the view that education is the right of everyone, man or woman, and it occurs throughout life. The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. exhorted: "Seek knowledge from the day you are born until the day you leave". It is compulsory for a Muslim to seek knowledge throughout his whole life. This is explained in the following hadith, meaning:

Anas bin Malik r.a. narrated, Rasulullah s.a.w. exhorted; "Seeking knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim". (Riwayat Ibnu Majah)

Every branch of knowledge in this world is found in the al-Quran. It is the holy scripture delivered in the form of a divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. to be delivered to humans. Allah s.w.t exhorted in surah al-Mujadalah, verse 11, meaning; "O you who have believed, when you are told, "Space yourselves" in assemblies, then make space; Allah will make space for you. And when you are told, "Arise," then arise; Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do‘. The Al-Quran is the main source of reference for knowledge in Islam.

Meanwhile, morality (akhlak) is related to the aim of the Islamic message. However, among the main intentions of the messenger Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. was to consummate the nobility of morality (Zaizul et al 2018; Mohd Al Adib Samuri et al 2012). Allah s.w.t had
praised the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. because of His good moral values (Surah al-Qalam:4). Noble moral values are a sign of a person’s strong faith because a strong faith is capable of protecting humans from untoward incidents. Faith is capable of creating good standards of morality and character and conversely, a weak faith would destroy a person’s morality (al-Taubah: 119). Humankind is divided into several categories according to the al-Quran, such as muslimun, mu’minun, muttaqun, muhsinun, salihun, sabirun, taibun and mukhlisun. Based on these categories, the al-Quran has the approach that can change the soul and make humankind successful in this world and in the afterlife. There are several verses in the al-Quran that discusses the method for healing ignoble moral values via various approaches, among them includes; a) through natural instinct (fitrah) and the need for the self to seek religious guidelines (Surah al-Fatihah:1-5; al-Isra‘: 67), b) knowledge and education in order to differentiate between rights of a person and what is invalid (al-‘Alaq:1-5), c) contemplating to seek the truth and faith (Surah al-Mulk:10), dan d) implementing the correct practices of worship that yields a peaceful soul and trains the self to abstain from what is forbidden (Surah al-An’am:162).

The element of morality is an important element that possesses a strong and wholesome influence in building a civilization and life in an Islamic society. This is because Islam has expanded the meaning of noble moral values to all spectrums of human life in every aspect and activity, either in relations between man and himself, man and Allah s.w.t, amongst man or the interaction between man and the universe (Fauziah Ibrahim et al 2018). Islamic morality is individualistic in nature. Islam glorifies humans by not considering ethnicity (race), skin colour, language, nationality, class or religion. Faisal Othman (1997) and Nasir Omar et al (2018) stated that Muslims need to avoid misunderstandings when examining the fundamentals of religion as a symbol reflecting only personal practices, such as prayers, fasting, akat and performing the Hajj without involving them in family, neighbourly or community relationships. Moreover, noble moral values are also related to other intentions and objectives that are honourable, sublime and noble as well as a motivation for gaining rewards in this world and the afterlife.

Islamic morality can enliven a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere among individuals and society, including several forms of prohibitions such as; a) prohibition to kill/murder (Surah al-Isra‘:31, Surah al-Nisa‘:29); b) prohibition to rob/steal (surah al-Mumtahanah:12); c) prohibition to lie (Surah Yunus: 66), and d) prohibition regarding vice or forbidden sexual activities (Surah al-Isra‘: 32). Besides that, the al-Quran contains numerous suggestions and motivations for humankind to always do beneficial and good deeds as well as endeavour towards success (Surah al-Baqarah: 148; Surah al-Kahfi:110; Surah al-kahfi:30; Surah al-Mu'minun:1-11; Surah as-Syams:9; Surah Ali Imran:104; Surah at-Taubah:88; dan Surah al-Hajj:77). Islam has outlined various methods for forming and practicing moral values that must be adhered in all aspects of life, from the simplest matters to the most important, such as proper etiquette at the dining table to the proper manner in developing a government. Al-Qardhawi (1996) and Zaizul (2018) stated that there is no element of divide and isolate in the moral system because goodwill and justice is meant for all humankind being subjects of Allah s.w.t.

The mandatory ‘commanding the good and forbidding the evil’ (amar ma’ruf, nahi munkar) is portrayed as something that is important for all Muslims because its implementation is a criterion for obtaining the title of ‘the best Muslim’ by Allah s.w.t (Surah Ali Imran:104). It is not only compulsory for Muslims to refrain from all actions that are prohibited by Allah SWT and the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w, but it is compulsory to prevent all forms of prohibitions and vice that occurs in the family and society. Whatever effort and activity that leads to the goodwill and wellbeing of the society is referred to Amar Ma'rif.
Whatever actions that are prohibited by Islam should be prevented and curtailed so that it does not escalate or spread in society. This requires the actions of Nahi Munkar, which refers to the prohibition of all forms of sins and vice that occur according to the capability and jurisdiction available. Hence, the ‘Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar’ concept is not only related to matters pertaining to specific forms of worship, fundamentals or ideologies but it also includes social, political and cultural matters as well as religious decrees. Neglecting the obligatory nature of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar could cause and invite the wrath of Allah s.w.t. (Surah al-Ma'idah:78-79). The neglect and failure in implementing this responsibility could make the hope of building a household institution that is harmonious and peaceful, look very remote.

Development is a demand made by Islam so that humankind can obtain al-falah, which is a successful and harmonious life in this world and the afterlife that includes full human physical capabilities and tranquillity of life that could be achieved through a balance between material and spiritual needs (al-Mu'minun:1-11). Development of human capital is divided into individual and societal development. As for the individual aspect, it starts with the process involving the purification of the soul (tazkiyah jiwa) (al-Syams:7-10; al-A'la:14-15). Besides that, successful individuals are those who are always involved in the Holy Struggle (jihad), by using their soul and property in the name of Allah s.w.t (at-Taubah:88). Another characteristic of a successful individual is one who frequently bows (rukuk) and prostrates (sujud) as a sign of submission to Allah s.w.t and an act of goodness (Surah al-Hajj:77). Islam is a world affirmative religion. Individuals are urged to be aware that they are Muslims as well as to learn to understand that the universe and the world is a place where humans live (al-Qardhawi 1996; Faisal Othman 1997; Mutsalim Khareng et al 2016). This is because humans can enjoy and appreciate all that is deemed halal by Allah s.w.t. by endeavouring to supplement their economic products.

Development according to Islam is multi-dimensional and comprises physical, spiritual and religious aspects as well as all matters related to life (Zidni Nuran et al 2017; Zaizul Ab Rahman et al 2018; Hoesni et al 2012). Development in Islam should consider five main principles or objectives of syariat (‘maqasid khamasah’), which are the safeguarding or protecting of religion, the soul and life, the mind, property and race or decendency. These objectives show that Islamic teachings not only encourage its subjects to excel by virtue of values and work ethics but also to protect the subjects before any form of destruction or setback occurs, including the aspect of carrying out duties. Next, faith (iman) and piety or God-fearing (taqwa) indicate implications of good deeds or practices, which are practices that do not involve any element of wastage, misappropriation or corruption. Hence, a country that possesses baraqah will produce harmony and peace in that country. Harmony is translated in the form of the overall wellbeing of society that includes material and non-material elements, such as an increase in the GDP or earnings of the country or individual, sources of wealth, a high level of education and literacy, level of health etc.

Besides that, exemplary public-sector staff needs to adhere to the tenets of morality, work ethics and a high religious spirit. This is because each person has specific responsibilities that must be fulfilled to obtain a peaceful life in this world and in the afterlife. Spiritual strength and religious vigour refers to a Muslim’s commitment to implement all aspects of religion in nurturing the relationship between a subject and the Creator. An individual’s actions and behaviour should be able to realise the meaning of Islam, which is to sincerely and wholeheartedly submit and surrender both in corporeal and spiritual aspects to Allah s.w.t as a manifestation of human creation through religious practices in all aspects of life (Surah al-An'am:162; Surah al-Zariyat:56, and Surah Ahzab:36). Muslims should be successful and live luxuriously as well as be successful in the afterlife.
Defending the nation is one of the branches of jihad. Islam is concerned about the importance of defending the security and dignity of religion, race and country. Hence, the aspect of defending the country does not only focus on the strength of the self but also the spiritual and physical strength. Allah s.w.t has instructed humankind to live, administer and care for the earth as best as possible based on HIS commands and prohibitions. In order to fulfil those wishes and responsibilities, each individual needs to play a role in the society of a particular country. In reality, it is not solely the responsibility of leaders but rather the combined efforts of the leader and the people. The al-Quran has mentioned several important aspects on defending the country. First, the principle of upholding justice and peace in society. The exhortations of Allah s.w.t (surah al-Nisa: 135; surah al-ma'idah:8; and surah al-Nisa':58) affirm that the aspect of justice should be practiced not only by the individual but also leaders in every level of society. Allah s.w.t. also affirmed that it is obligatory that the responsibility of trust be given to those who have the right to it without considering favouritism, position, family ties etc. Moreover, those who commit evil deeds and vice should be punished according to the full force of justice in order to safeguard peace, justice and benefits accrued to a nation.

Second, implementation of all acts of worship (ibadah) according to the syariat should be carried out in a peaceful atmosphere. In other words, Muslims are able to perform personal (fardu) and preferable (sunat) acts of worship openly, such as congregational prayers (solat berjemaah), collecting zakat and performing the Hajj without feeling fear or facing threats to one’s life, property and family. The authorities should make it compulsory for people to perform all acts of personal worship and establish commensurate punishment for those who neglect their obligations to perform these acts of personal worship (ibadah fardu), such as not fasting during Ramadan, refusing to pay zakat etc. Hence, these two primary principles should be implemented by the people, including non-Muslims.

2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows that the overall mean score for the respondent’s understanding of developing a nation concept dimension was high with a mean score of 4.82 and a Standard Deviation of .464 (on Likert Scale of 1 to 5). The next finding showed that from the five items for the ‘nation’ concept dimension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing a country is part of the call of Islam</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a developed nation is part of the call of Islam</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and administration of economic activities, such as production</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>.530</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of goods, should focus on halal and haram issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing the tenets of morality and work ethics is very important for</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhancing the quality of work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual strength and religious enthusiasm could develop a race as well</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>as a country</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, Table 2 shows that the overall mean score for the respondents’ understanding of the ‘defending the nation’ concept was high with a mean score of 4.69 and a Standard Deviation of .511 (on Likert Scale of 1 to 5). The next finding showed that from the five items for ‘defending the nation’ concept dimension, the item ‘based on the Syariah Islam the nation would always be protected and blessed by Allah s.w.t’ indicated the highest understanding (M=4.88, SD=.391); while, the statement with the lowest score was 'Islam emphasises the
importance of protecting the security and dignity of religion, race and country’ (M=4.55, SD=.566).

**Table 2 Level of Understanding - Defending the Nation Concept**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>.511</td>
<td>Tinggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the country is one of the branches of jihad</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>.539</td>
<td>Tinggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the country is the individual’s responsibility based on various aspects of life</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td>Tinggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam emphasises the importance of protecting the security and dignity of religion, race and country</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>.566</td>
<td>Tinggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting a country not only focuses on one’s strength but also physical and spiritual strength</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>.479</td>
<td>Tinggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on Syariah Islam, the nation will always be protected and blessed by Allah s.w.t</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>Tinggi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, Table 3 shows the overall mean score for the respondents’ understanding of the Negara Zikir concept was high with a mean of 4.70 and a Standard Deviation of .519 (on Likert Scale of 1 to 5). The next finding showed that among the five dimensions of understanding, the knowledge dimension indicated the highest score for understanding (M=4.82, SD=.448), while the dimension with the lowest score was the nation development dimension (M=4.64, SD=.542).

**Table 3 Level of Understanding - Negara Zikir Concept**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>.519</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>.448</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble Moral Values</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>.552</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amar Ma’ruf Nahi Mungkar</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation Development</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defending the Nation</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>.511</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, Table 3 shows that the overall mean score for the respondents’ understanding of ‘developing a nation’ concept dimension were high with a mean score of 4.64 and a Standard Deviation of .542 (on Likert Scale of 1 to 5). The next finding showed that from the five items for ‘developing a nation’ concept dimension, the item ‘nurturing the tenets of morality and work ethics is very important for enhancing the quality of work’ indicated the highest understanding (M=4.73, SD=.493); while, the statement with the lowest score was 'building a developed nation is part of the call of Islam' (M=4.45, SD=.610). In general, this finding shows that respondents’ had a high level of understanding because all the respondents had a good educational background.

### 3. CONCLUSION

A clear understanding of the characteristics of Negara Zikir among public sector staff could help realise the intentions of implementing the Negara Zikir concept. It is actually supported by upholding the teachings of Ahli Sunnah Waljama’ah and belonging to the Syafi’i sect. Appreciating the philosophy of MIB would help realise the formation of ‘Negara Zikir’ and its society that always remembers and glorifies Allah s.w.t in every situation and make Brunei Darussalam an Islamic nation with its citizens becoming ‘Baldatun Tayyibatu wa Rabbun Ghafur’; a prosperous nation that has received the forgiveness of Allah s.w.t.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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[1] Al- Quran
Level of Developing a Nation Concept by Country Devoted to God Approach


