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**DEVELOPING A MODEL OF HUMAN MANAGEMENT FOR  
MUSLIMS IN CREATIVE MEDIA INDUSTRIES**

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**Abstract**

This paper proposes a model of human management developed from a qualitative research project carried out between 2016 and 2019. The project involved a total number of 100 participants who work with television and new media industries in Malaysia. These participants include 14 managers, 46 creative production workers, 30 production workers (technical), and 10 participants representing policymakers. The model was built upon a four-layer conceptual framework comprising analyses of (i) organisation, (ii) policy, (iii) production community and (iv) product/text. In doing so, we examined how these media production workers manage and balance between their; (i) personal, emotional, (ii) religious-spiritual and (iii) professional life. The study also identifies systematic approaches to managing the challenges faced by Muslims media professionals. A model of human management proposed by this project takes into consideration of elements, such as (i) organisational culture, (ii) values, (iii) leadership, (iv) workplace policy and also, such meanings as (i) 'being human,' (ii) 'humanised workplace,' and (iii) 'doing good work.'

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## 1. Introduction

The creative industries are known as industries that ‘supply goods and services that we broadly associate with cultural, artistic, or simply entertainment value’ (Caves, 2000, p. 1). The creative media industries are associated with ‘individual creativity, skill and talent’ (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2001, p. 5). These encompass the commercial and non-commercial industries of art and design; film, television, radio, audio-visual publishing; fine arts; music and the performing arts; software and computer gaming; advertising; and crafts (DCMS, 2001; Ministry of Communication and Multimedia Malaysia, 2009; United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD) 2008). Creative media industries become a key feature of government economic policy across the globe, estimated to drive GDP and job growth and accelerate urban development (European Commission, 2010; Ross, 2009). In our project, the term ‘creative media industries’ refers to value chain in media production, that include analysis of 1) sociocultural factors, 2) national and organisational policy, 3) production community, and 4) textual analysis of media products.

Distinct from ‘human resource management’ (HRM) that views human beings as a source for maximising profits and as economic resource, ‘human management’ treats human as self-determined beings. From the western perspective, the term ‘human management’ equivalent to the French autogestion and the German Selbstverwaltung whereby humans are ‘self-determined human beings’ responding autonomously and consciously to certain social conditions (Supek, 2006, p. 586). These conditions include a structure of production, the social and technological division of labour, sociocultural factors, and the prevailing traditions and habits of human behaviour.

Unlike the western concept, ‘human management’ recognises human beings as the vicegerent (khalifah) on earth that are not treated as a form of capital/resource. We draw upon al-Ghazali's (1953/2005) concept of ‘insan’ that includes four spiritual domains such as 1) spirit (ruh), 2) heart (qalb), 3) soul (nafs), and 4) mind/sense (‘aql). These domains become the basis of our understanding of how Muslim creative media workers should/ought to manage their work and religious life as well as respond to the sociocultural, economic and technological challenges.

Aside from these Islamic concepts, we also refer to sociological approaches to labour and organisation through Supek's (2006) and Manz's (1992) terms ‘self/human management,’ which point to how human, including creative labour, should/ought to be managed and self-manage themselves at their workplace. In our analysis of the working life, we refer to the term ‘humanised workplace.’ We define such a workplace according to the Quran and Sunnah. We suggest four positive attitudes that suggest ‘humanised workplace’. These attitudes embodied by the Prophet Mohammed’s teaching such as siddiq (speak the truth), amanah (trustworthy), tabligh (to spread the truth) and fatonah (intelligence) (Mughtar et al., 2017, p. 559). Other attitudes include ‘adl (do justice), haqq (revealing the truth), nasihah (giving good advice), i’tidal (balanced), hisbah (prevention of evil attitude), and wasatiyyah (respecting and valuing moderation) (Karim, 2019; Mughtar et al., 2017; Pintak, 2014).

## 2. Problem Statement

We have identified two main issues in the existing scholarships, which also need immediate attention to the development of human management model for Muslims in creative media industries. The first problem is the lack of theories or conceptual framework for studies of Muslims in creative media industries, which requires advanced research approaches and theories that can be applied to studies of human management and creative media industries. Numerous studies on labour in creative media industries emphasise the quality of working life from western perspectives.

Scholars of media production studies, for instance, have discovered the poor quality of working lives of creative media workers can impact the quality of the content of media products (Born, 2004; Banks, 2017; Caldwell, 2008; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). Scholars of creative industries found that creative media workers are vulnerable to exploitation and self-exploitation (Banks, 2007; Banks, 2017; Karim, 2019; Ursell, 2000). Such professional experiences consequently affect the quality of media content and employees' emotional well-being. Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) research into three media industries (magazine, music, TV industries) identified such issues as self-exploitation and lack of autonomy, which have affected the work-life balance of creative media workers. These studies, however, are rooted in western scholarships. There is still a lack of production studies on Muslims that apply Islamic concepts to explore the challenges facing by Muslims who work in the creative media industries. Our study is significant as it seeks to develop a model that may support our understanding of how religion shapes the management of media professionals and media products, as well as the working life of Muslims in the media industries.

The second problem may be found in the management of Muslim media. Muslim management is facing a problem in the application of religious values in every day working life. Although some may argue that the Prophetic approaches to human management are the best solutions to manage Muslim professionals, there are some problems with how can Muslim organisations and managers effectively applied these approaches to managing their employees or subordinates (Karim et al., 2017). For example, a recent study shows that the ideological clash (e.g., the Wahabi, Salafi fundamentalists vs the moderate Islam) that exists within an Islamic TV in Central London was problematic (Karim, 2015). The ideology has shaped the organisational culture of the television channel, the quality of its programmes and the working life of its production staff. The challenges in managing Muslim media organisation also caused by diverse Islamic identities, practices and principles, which make it challenging to adopt practical management approaches based upon the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah (Karim & Ahmad, 2018). Thus, Muslim creative industries are in dire needs of a model for managing employees according to the Islamic values.

## 3. Research Questions

As a guide for developing a human management model, our research asks the following questions:

- What kind of challenges that affect the wellbeing of creative media workers?
- What are the factors that contribute to these challenges?
- How do these creative media workers manage such challenges?

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to develop a model of human management for Muslims who work in the media industries. In doing so, we sought to accomplish the following objectives by:

- identifying the challenges that affect the wellbeing of Muslim creative media workers;
- examining factors that contribute to such challenges; and
- identifying strategies to cope with the challenges, in their attempts to strike a balance between work and religious life.

## 5. Research Methods

Our methods for developing human management model are qualitative, in that, we gather and analyse the subjective experiences of Muslims working in creative media industries. We seek to identify their challenges while trying to balance their professional life and their religious life. We also examine the approaches that creative media managers employ to managing the emotional and professional constraints of their subordinates.

This qualitative research project involved a total number of 100 participants who work with television and new media industries in Malaysia. These participants include 14 managers, 46 creative production workers, 30 production workers (technical), and 10 participants representing policymakers. A four-layer analytical framework comprising of organisation, policy, production community and product/text is used to examine how these media production workers manage and balance between their personal, emotional, religious-spiritual and professional life.

### 5.1. Research Participants

This research project engaged with local media organisations such as RTM, TV AlHijrah, Media Prima Bhd, ASTRO, Persatuan Penerbit TV Malaysia (PTVM), and Persatuan Penerbit Filem Malaysia (PFM), Creative Content Industry Guild (CCIG) Malaysia, Persatuan Animasi Malaysia (ANIMAS), Inspidea, and Les Copaque. Policymakers such as Lembaga Penapis Filem (LPF) and Institut Penyiaran dan Penerangan Tun Abdul Razak (IPPTAR), Kementerian Komunikasi & Multimedia Malaysia (KKMM) also offer their insights into the development of a model of human management.

We approached two categories of Muslim creative media workers whom we interviewed and observed them while they are on the job:

- creative managers [TV producers, assistant producers, writers/researchers, concept artists/designers for animation/graphic production] and;
- below-the-line workers/production workers [e.g., production/floor managers, camera operators, light and sound operators/engineers.

After getting consent from the companies, we conducted the face-to-face interviews with the selected participants using semi-structured interview protocol and focus groups (roundtable discussions). Each interview took about 60 to 90 minutes, which then transcribed verbatim. To ensure the confidentiality of research participants, each of them were given a pseudonym.

## 5.2. Data Analysis and Verification

The transcribed data were transferred into a qualitative software for data management and analysis. The data were coded according to Clarke and Braun's (2017) approach through which we identify themes and patterns. Repeated textual meanings involved process of comparing and contrasting of interview data, which continued until the data was saturated. The study was verified using data triangulation to ensure that the responses came from diverse participants holding different work roles within an organisation. The analysis was then reviewed by peers and committee members from the industries. Such a review committee involved research team members and non-members among colleagues who were not directly taking part in the research project. The results of the mapping between data and literature helped us develop a model of human management that can be applied by the creative media industries in managing Muslims in particular, and the religiously diverse workforce, in general.

## 6. Findings and Recommendation

Due to a large amount of data gathered and analysed, we could not present the quotes given by each respondent. Therefore, in this article, we present the data through summaries derived from the thematic analysis, which also answers to our research questions: 1) What kind of challenges that affect the wellbeing of creative media workers? 2) What are the factors that contribute to these challenges? 3) How do these creative media workers manage such challenges?

With a limited space allowed by this proceeding, it is impossible to present all participants' quotes and elaborate the findings in-depth. Also, concerning the anonymity of the participating media organisation, we decided to emphasise on the issues, contributing factors and the coping strategies. Hence, a three-part summary of the findings would be sufficient, which guided us in developing a model of human management for Muslims in creative industries.

### 6.1. Challenges affecting the wellbeing of creative media workers

#### *Work-life balance*

The research participants confirmed that their job has affected their work-life balance, which include lack of rest, financial constraints, and to a certain extent, led to problems in their personal relationships (due to limited personal/family time).

#### *Balancing work and religious life*

Participants also revealed that their stressful work culture also involved 'meeting the deadlines' resulting their 'lack of adherence to religious practices'. Their employers' insensitivity toward the needs of the members of production community such as allocation of times for prayers and the donning *hijab* (applied to female workers), have also indicated the challenges in striking a balance between work and religious life.

#### *Health and emotional wellbeing*

'Feeling unappreciated' and 'lack of motivation,' have also shaped the workplace culture in creative industries. These are among issues that affected media workers' physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing, to the extent workers experience anxiety and pressure in their attempt to accomplish their production tasks.

#### *Exploitation*

The nature of work in creative media industries involved pressures to complete the tasks, stressful environment and long working hours. The lack of specificity in terms of work roles and uncertainty regarding service contract, salary and copyrights – are regarded as a form of exploitation in creative media industries.

### ***Self-exploitation***

The workers' love their job have caused them to self-exploit. Workers in animation production, in particular, tend to enjoy doing their tasks. The risk of loving their job too much, although it is good for the organisation, may result in overwork among workers. Subsequently, it may affect their physical and mental health as well as their emotional wellbeing.

## **6.2. Factors contributing to the challenges**

### ***Workplace environment***

One of the contributing factors that impact on the wellbeing of workers is their workplace environment. Even though participants have a certain degree of autonomy to express their creativity, these are governed by guidelines, constrained by deadlines, and sometimes, lack of recognition. Thus, such a poor workplace environment limited their creativity and opportunity for self-improvement.

### ***Poor working conditions***

The findings also indicate that a long working hours has a significant impact on the workers' wellbeing. These workers have difficulties in managing their time and energy, and balancing between their personal, professional and religious life. Although working in creative media industries is known for such condition, it depends on the leadership of media organisation to initiate the change and search for solutions to the problems that may contribute to poor working conditions.

### ***Low Income***

Another factor that influences media workers' wellbeing is the low income. Those working in the production level, particularly, receive a low salary. For instance, the average basic monthly earnings of workers below-the-line are estimated below MYR 4,000 (approximately USD 1,000). Permanent staff who received fixed monthly income, despite having secured their tenure, have also expressed their concerns about the limited opportunity to gain a position at a managerial level (which also include getting their salary raised).

### ***Insecurity***

While workers on contract basis depend much on their pay through projects or service provided, they also faced insecurity. Some of their concerns were about the future of job in creative media industries. Such concerns include whether or not their contractual agreement will be renewed as well as the young entrants to the industry will replace their positions.

## **6.3. Strategies to manage the challenges**

In this study, creative media workers manage issues faced by them using two types of strategies – internal strategies and external strategies.

### **a. Internal strategy**

Participants believed that religious conviction to be the best coping strategy, which plays a vital role in helping them deal with their workplace environment. By looking at their challenges as a test from God

allow the participants to manage their emotion, subsequently, maintain their mental health (Baharudin et al., 2019).

### ***Production work makes a better person***

Working in an Islamic environment provide a support system that prepares these workers for the challenges (Karim & Ahmad, 2018). Participants shared how religious content that they involved in the production helped turned them into better persons. They were calmed and able to cope better with the pressure (Baharudin et al., 2019).

### ***Viewing work as 'ibadah'***

The notion of 'doing good work,' in particular, is central to the model of human management. Even though discussions of income and rates of pay are often raised, participants stated that they still need to maintain their spirits and motivation. Some participants prefer not to be demanding for raise because they believe that their job is part of their '*ibadah*' 'doing good work' and a form of 'submission to God'. The participants claimed they feel calmed and more relaxed even though they earned a low salary. For them, doing the job in the name of Islam equal to 'doing good work,' which allow them to seek Allah's blessings. Nonetheless, using religion as a coping strategy, if not properly regulated, may result in self-exploitation (Karim, 2015).

### **b. External strategy**

The analysis of feedback among managers and workers show that there are factors that can be considered as an external strategy to cope with workplace challenges. Such factors as 'good leadership' and 'workplace relations' were proven to be a significant motivational drive for the participants to work at a particular organisation. Human relations and good leadership may help workers maintain their wellbeing—reliable leadership support workers in resolving their issues. A good leader/manager emphasises the importance of teamwork, support, and belongingness in the workplace without compromising mental and emotional health. A workplace culture that promotes a healthy interpersonal and intrapersonal communication among and between superiors and peers result in a balanced and humanised workplace.

## **7. Conclusion**

Organisational culture, values, management strategies, and technological challenges are the core of human management in creative media industries. The policy of the media organisation reflects the values embraced by its leadership. Culture and values of an organisation may be seated along the spectrum, between liberal-secular, moderate and religious ends. These values shape the work environment, depending on the leadership of the media organisation. We acknowledge that religion is a powerful catalyst of change because it may affect the ways leaders/managers, creative and production workers perceive their work, self-manage themselves, and managing others while making creative decisions. Our project may not only contribute to the policy development for the wellbeing of creative media workers but also the labour force in Malaysia and abroad. We acknowledge the limitations of our exploratory study as it emphasises on creative media workers in the television and new media (animation) industries, not the entire ecosystem of creative industries in Malaysia. Although the model is designed for Muslims in the media, with a minor amendment, it can be applied by non-Muslim managers and workers. After all, Islam is a mercy to all (*Rahmatan lil 'Alamiin*).

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