

## Human Capital Development for Women based on the story of Maryam In the al-Quran

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**DOI Link:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i4/2776>

**Published Date:** 02 April 2017

### Abstract

Women hold the position of great importance and honour in the history of the glory of Islam. They are important indicators to the agent of the human capital development. Looking to the current challenges of life, issues of women's rights, modesty, and discrimination becomes the main agenda of the liberation of mind movement known as Liberal Islam. This movement demands the liberation of mind concerning women's issues. The al-Quran has told stories of women through the story of Maryam. Maryam is one of the stories that can be found in the al-Quran in surah Maryam. Maryam is an example of a Muslim woman that is honourable and obedient towards Allah s.w.t. The story of Maryam proves the power of Allah s.w.t. as it recalls the miraculous story of man's conception without a father which is the story of the prophet Isa a.s. Maryam was given a specialty by Allah s.w.t. as an example of human capital for women in shaping the feminine values using all the elements available inside them. This study has two objectives. First, it is to study the concept of human capital development from an Islamic perspective. Second, it is to analyse the concept of human capital development of excellent women through the story of Maryam from the al-Quran. This study is analysed using the content analysis method of the data collected from the library. The result of this study finds that the human capital development of women must consist of a balance between physical and spiritual. The result also shows that there are five elements in the human capital development in producing excellent women. Among them are to obey the commands of Allah s.w.t, 'uzlah (self-isolation), the religious obligations, to try and to believe alongside the maintenance of self-respect in shaping the women of today.

**Keywords:** Human Capital Development, women, the story of Maryam ibn Imran

### Introduction

Human capital development is one of the revolutionary ideas generated by the ex-Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in his effort to develop human as the tracks of excellence for future generation (Mohd Yusoff, 2014). Development is one of the things demanded by Islam in order to give birth to a man of good quality (Mohamad, 2007). Development according to Islam is different than the Western view of development. Western

development sees human from the aspect of physical and mental strength only (Kucharcikova, 2011). In addition to that, development according to Islam looks at spiritual strength as one of the main core that is integral in the development process through the strengthening of one's faith towards Allah s.w.t (Borham, 2008; Muhammad & Mohd Salleh, 2014).

In Malaysia, there are a lot of issues concerning the characteristics of the agent of development specifically among women. As an example, Liberal Islam is one of the liberation of mind movement that discusses the issues related to women. According to Ismail (2012); Mohd Yusof and Nordin (2010), the Liberal Islam movement fights for the freedom of speech for women to fight for the right to gender equality (feminism), the issue of the obligation to cover their modesty, polygamy and the distortion of religion purely based on their hearts and minds. These are observed in those who are directly involved in acts of development but do not possess the characteristics of an Islamic development agent. Due to that, humans as the vicegerent of Allah s.w.t. must possess certain characteristics that are aligned with the demands of Islam (Salleh, 2003).

When issues of the freedom to think for women arisen, it paints the picture of men involved in the development process acting on a role determined by the West by distorting the religion according to their whims. As an example, the Western development sees human characteristics as a mean of profit and they are willing to do anything to fulfill the demands of their whims. Such characterisation causes human to lose dependency towards Allah s.w.t (Mohd Shukri Hanapi, 2014:3). This is different from Islamic development that maintains a relationship with Allah s.w.t and that makes development as a tool to juxtapose oneself towards Allah s.w.t (Salleh, 2003).

Even so, Islam is a religion that gives recognition to women (Othman, 1993; Ab Rahman, 2010; Alias & Sa'ari, 2006). There are many discussions related to women in the al-Quran. Islam does not prohibit the participation of women in societal activities like politic, economy, social and such (Othman, 1993). Aside from that, the al-Quran's narration of women is also described upon in the al-Quran. The narration related to women through the story of Maryam can be made as a lesson to women of today. The name Maryam became one of the surah's names in the al-Quran as a reminder of the miraculous story of the conception of man without a father which is the prophet Isa a.s (Abdullah & Khalid, 2009). In regards to that, the story of Maryam in the al-Quran is closely related to the shaping of human's attitude, especially among Muslim women.

Therefore, the main aim of this study is to identify the concept of Islam-compliant human capital development. Other than that, the second aim is to identify the element of women capital development based on the lessons analysed from the story of Maryam. Thus, women development must be carried out through the practice of spiritual deeds (Nik Pa, 2007). Through the practice of those deeds, it can give a positive effect towards the development of women in the context of holistic human development.

### The Methodology Of The Study

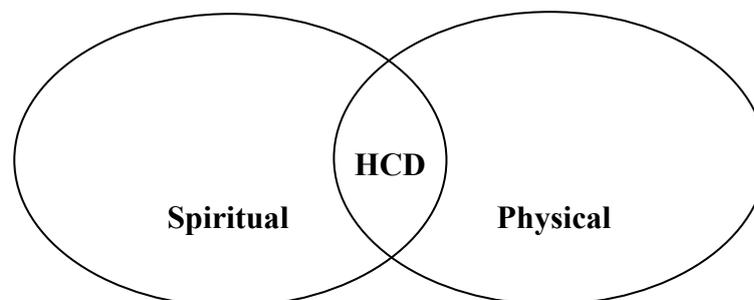
This study is analysed using the content analysis method based on data collected from the library method. This study analyses data using the content analysis method. The first objective of the study is to study the concept of human capital development from the Islamic perspective by using the library method. To achieve the first objective, there is an evaluation of sources like books, articles, and online materials. Next, the second objective aims to analyse a few elements in the women capital development based on the story of Maryam in the al-Quran. The main sources of the analysis include documents like translated holy books, books, articles, journals and such.

Next, according to Neuendorf (2002); Schreir, (2012), content analysis is a qualitative research study that uses analysis method. This analysis is used to review and explains translations that are available on documents. Content analysis is a research technique by making conclusions systematically using data in the form of documents (Yusof, 2004). Content analysis has three purposes. First, it is to review messages, issues or themes from secondary sources in the form of writing. Second, it is to analyse a large group of text and third, to study discussions in the form of text that was written in the past (Neuman, 2006).

### Human Capital Development from the Islamic Perspective

Islam is a religion that emphasises on development. According to Borham (2008), development, according to Islam, is not solely focus on material development; it also includes the development of the spiritual aspect. Mohamad (2007) states that development is a process that fixes the lives of the society making it systematic and civilised. Development does not solely fulfill the demands of the physical but it combines the development of physical and spiritual in shaping the real human worth (Nik Pa, 2007; Abang Muis, 2015).

Diagram 1: The model of human capital development in Islam:



Based on the above diagram, in developing humans, agent of the development must possess a balance between the spiritual and physical development. Spiritual development through spiritual acts gives true meaning to the creation of man by being a vicegerent on the world of Allah s.w.t. Spiritual acts are a result of confidence in the act of self-devotion and are a manifestation of the strength of one's faith towards Allah s.w.t (Borham, 2008).

Development, from the Islamic perspective, is meant for human instead of the other way around (Salleh, 2003). Muhammad Syukri Salleh added that development according to Islam has seven principles. First is Islamic tasawur as the mould. Second is human as the agent of development. The third is that both this world and the Hereafter as the time for development. Fourth is fard ayn knowledge as the mainframe of development. Fifth is that the spiritual acts as the method of development. Sixth is that the natural resources as the tool

of development. Seventh is *mardatillah* (the approval of Allah s.w.t) as the ultimate goal of development.

Next, human capital development refers to the human themselves as agents of the development and must be raised according to the mould of Islam (Ahmad, 2006). Ahmad (2006) also added man is made up of two components that must be developed to expand the potentials in them so they are well aligned with their faith towards Allah s.w.t. Based on the Muslim context, emphasis on the human capital development prioritises the development of the spiritual that includes human development process from all aspects of a man's potential. Therefore, the aim of an Islam-compliant human capital development is *al-Falah* which is the prosperity of life through success in this world and the Hereafter (Borham, 2008:56).

### **Women in the al-Quran**

Before the arrival of Islam, women did not hold a special position in the society. However, the arrival of Islam changes the position and status of women. Islam has uplifted the women's dignity by giving them important roles appropriate to their inner strength. Islam gave equality to men and women in their role related to specific and general acts of worship. In the time of the Prophet s.a.w, women contributed heavily to Islam through the forming of the familial and societal institutions (Ab. Rahman & Wan Ahmad & Ismail, 2010).

The stories in the al-Quran are the best and most beneficial. Allah s.w.t told the stories in the al-Quran not through narration alone, but it also contains certain meanings that must be taken as a lesson. The al-Quran has told many stories of women that can be made as an example for modern women. Among that are the stories of the wives of the Prophet s.a.w, Asiah, the wife of the Pharaoh and others. If studied thoroughly the involvement of women in the working sector during the rise of Islam, women are allowed to work in various fields inside or outside of their house. They are allowed to work with the condition that the occupation they undertook must be done alongside the preservation of their self, dignity, and religion (Abdur Rahman, 1986).

### **The Narration of Maryam in the al-Quran**

Maryam was bestowed a specialty by Allah s.w.t to be made as a capital example for women of today in shaping womanly values using all the inner elements of a woman. According to Syed Qutb (1995), one of the aims of the narration is as proof of the divine revelation and the prophethood of the *anbiya'*. The stories in the al-Quran are not a result of fabricated stories listed out for a literary evaluation; instead, it is one of the Quranic methods to give out signs to man in an authentic form (Hamzah, 2009:56).

Next, the narration of the story of Maryam in the al-Quran is stated in certain surahs for example surah Maryam, al-Imran and surah al-Tahrim. The telling of the story of Maryam is very interesting as it tells the birth of prophet Isa a.s without a father as prove of the power of Allah s.w.t. Maryam, known as a pure and honourable girl, had given birth to a baby without a husband. This is a proof of the power of Allah s.w.t in being able to create something according to His will. According to Ibn Kathir (2003), Maryam is the only child of the Imran family, the descendant of prophet Daud a.s from among the Israelis; Maryam is the only daughter in the Imran family.

According to Ibn Kathir (2000); Abdullah et al. (2009:71); Sayyid Qutb (2000), Maryam was raised under the care of prophet Zakaria a.s who was her uncle. Maryam was devoted to Allah s.w.t. She always obeyed the instructions of Allah s.w.t, protection from the evil of the world causes Maryam to not look at the riches of the world. This is different from the society of that time consumed with a greed for wealth and was always chasing the riches of the world.

As a woman who strongly worshipped Allah s.w.t and distanced herself from the wealth of the world, Allah s.w.t had chosen Maryam as one of the best among the women to be made an example for women of today (al-Qurtubi, 2007). According to al-Qurtubi (2007), the story of Maryam illustrates to us about the patience of a woman who had to face ridicules from a society who thought she had committed adultery for being able to give birth to a child without a father. However, as a devout servant of Allah s.w.t, Maryam accepted her fate sincerely. This story also serves as proof of the strength and power of Allah s.w.t in the conception of His creation (Abdullah et al., 2009:71).

### **Women Capital Development based on the story of Maryam in the al-Quran**

The result from the data analysis carried out is that to give birth to a man of quality, there must be a balance between the physical and the spiritual. Both basics must be prioritised to produce a man of high quality in all aspect of life. Due to the fact that the story of Maryam is a story full of lessons for humans especially women, this study takes five applicable character elements for women as agents of the human capital development. Among that are to obey the instructions of Allah s.w.t, *'uzlah*, the religious obligations, to make effort and to trust as well as preserving self-dignity in shaping the women of today.

#### **1. Obey the instructions of Allah s.w.t**

The first element involved in human capital development for women in the story of Maryam is obeying the instructions of Allah s.w.t. To obey the instructions of Allah s.w.t is an important strategy in developing the soul of every human capital. Said Allah s.w.t:

That means: O Mary, be devoutly obedient to your Lord and prostrate and bow with those who bow [in prayer]."

(Surah al-Imran, 19:43)

Based on the verse above, according to al-Qurtubi (2008) and Ibn Kathir (2000), the word *uqnuti* means to cling to compliance with full concentration. Meanwhile, HAMKA (1990) stated the word means to obey every instruction of Allah s.w.t. Al-Qurtubi (2008) quoted from al-Auza'l, after the angel Jibril a.s had carried on the command of Allah s.w.t, Maryam immediately stands up to perform prayer causing both her legs to be swollen from her act of worship. Maryam was also known as a woman who strongly worships and obeys the commands of Allah s.w.t (HAMKA, 1990).

Every human, especially women, must observe the true nature of the self by evaluating an act before committing it (Mohd Hassan, 1981). If an act that is to be carried is for the purpose of self-interest and subscribes only to lust, then the intention must be adjusted in order to seek the approval of Allah s.w.t. This is because, an individual life built upon materialistic ground and lust does not give any benefit to the value of life instead it will only incur the wrath of Allah s.w.t (El-Batnani, 2000:220).

In other words, obeying the instructions and leaving the prohibitions of Allah s.w.t requires the process of soul-purification. If an individual does not purify their soul, there are bound to be reprehensible nature seeping into their inner self (Abang Muis, 2015). The purification of the soul can disassociate the human self, specifically women, from the nature of pride, arrogance and all other forms of the *mazmumah* nature (Ahmad Farid, 2012). Therefore, the women's role as a devout and obedient servant of Allah s.w.t must obey every instruction of Allah s.w.t from all aspect of life to obtain the highest level of humanity. In relation to that, self-enslavement towards Allah s.w.t is the core to the development of women and is an important element as a wall to protect women from committing acts that would incur the wrath of Allah s.w.t (Abang Muis, 2015).

## 2. 'Uzlah

The second element in the development of human capital for women based on the story of Maryam is 'uzlah or self-isolation. 'Uzlah originated from the word 'azala (عزل) which meant distancing and avoiding. Meanwhile, 'uzlah is isolating self from others (al-Mu'jam al-Arabiyy al-Asasiy, 1988). According to Lutpi Mustafa el-Batnani (2000), the term 'uzlah is a concept of worship that is highly encouraged in Islam that takes the form of self-isolation from committing acts that are not permissible or go against the *syarak* (canon law). The meaning of *tasawwuf* is the act of being alone, retreat, isolating self from the affairs of the world like what was practiced by the *Sufis* as an act of worship to Allah s.w.t (Nazneen Ismail & Mohd Noorikhwan Sarbini, 2015). This is as was mentioned by Allah s.w.t:

That means: "And mention, [O Muhammad], in the Book [the story of] Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place toward the east."  
(Surah Maryam, 19:16)

In studying the meaning of the word withdrew from verse 16 of surah Maryam, al-Qurtubi (2008) opined, the word *al-Intibaadz* is self-isolation and self-seclusion. Fellow *mufassirin* differs in opinions regarding the reason Maryam isolated herself. Ibn Kathir (2000) quoted from As-Suddi, Maryam isolated herself to purify herself from *haid* (menstruation) and *nifas* (post-natal bleeding). Other opinion stated that the self-isolation is for worship towards Allah s.w.t. This opinion is the most accurate because Maryam was readily known to be assigned to take care of the place of worship towards Allah s.w.t. This is because Maryam is well-known with the descendant of the guardians of the worship place for the children of Israel in Jerusalem (al-Qurtubi, 2008; Abdullah & Khalid, 2009: 79).

According to Abdullah & Khalid (2009), when the angel brought news of Maryam's pregnancy, she isolated herself to a place. The purpose of the self-isolation is to get closer to Allah s.w.t to avoid raising questions that might tarnish Islam (Basmeh, 2001). She isolated herself for worship and to find her strength through praying, remembering and worshipping Allah s.w.t. Maryam looked for strength to find the will to endure all the tests and the rest she surrenders everything to the provision of Allah s.w.t.

Based on this story, there is a direct relation to the crisis of the women of today. Some of the women do not practice mediocrity especially in the aspect of clothing. They are influenced by the anti-Islam group whose aim is to distance Muslim women from true faith

(Alias & Sa'ari, 2006). Therefore, by isolating self (*'uzlah*) a woman can liberate herself from negative attitudes through the practice of an authentic Islamic-lifestyle. This is because, the practice of *'uzlah* causes an individual to think about the greatness of Allah s.w.t and to get rid of attitudes that are contradictory to the teachings of Islam (el-Batnani, 2000: 323). The women do not need to be excessive in aspects that are contradictory to Islam in order to save the mental and physical of the women of today that only prioritises worldly affairs.

### 3. The obligation of worship

The next in the capital development for women is through the application of the obligation of worship. Developing humans through worship can be implemented through the worship program. Worship is divided into general and specific worship. Specific worship includes the relationship between a human with Allah s.w.t like prayers, fasting, reading the al-Quran and etc. meanwhile, general worship includes the of the actions of humans when interacting with one another (Muhamad, 1993:45). Muslims men and women have an equal responsibility in performing worship towards Allah s.w.t. this is explained by Allah s.w.t:

That means: "O Mary, be devoutly obedient to your Lord and prostrate and bow with those who bow [in prayer]."

(Surah al-Imran, 19:43)

There are varying opinions in translating the above verse. Al-Tabari (2007) quoted from Abu Ja'far that the underlined verse above carries the definition of having a sincere intention solely because of Allah s.w.t. Meanwhile, Ibn Kathir (2000); at-Tabari (2007) quoted from al-Auza' that the act of prostrating and bowing causes the secretion of yellow liquid from the foot sole until both Maryam's legs are swollen. This differs from the opinion of al-Qurtubi (2007) that stated that the word bow meant bowing together through congregational prayer. This explains why man are demanded to worship Allah s.w.t and is highly encouraged to pray in a congregation.

According to Abdul Rahman (2008:10), maintaining the act of praying is included in the group of devout believers as stated I surah al-Mukminun verse 111. Man must preserve the perfection of their prayers by performing prayers with full concentration and understanding the meaning of words in the prayers. They will gain success through their patience in worshipping Allah s.w.t. In regards to women as the agent of human capital development, acts of worship like prayer js an act that can prevent the agent of development from acts of dishonour. This can be observed through what was said by Allah s.w.t in surah al-Ankabut verse 45. Allah s.w.t asserts that prayer performed by an individual can help prevent acts of vices and evil (Mahmud, n.d.).

Every Muslim individual specifically women are encouraged to performed supplementary prayers after obligatory prayers and to perform qiamullail at night. According to HAMKA (1990), at night a person knows their God more and it will be the source of their inner strength for those who performed worship at night. The execution of worship must be done for the aim wanting to create a good relationship with Allah s.w.t and not for the praises of fellow humans. For an example, in a marriage institution, a wife must be sincere in taking care and performing her duty as a wife, for example in cooking and taking care of the children (Alias & Sa'ari, 2006). Every acts and deed performed must be accompanied with an intention of worship for Allah s.w.t only and to hope for the reward of the priceless heaven. Therefore,

women in capital development that possess this characteristic will have a strong soul that can endure any form of tests and obstacles in life and will always believe in Allah s.w.t.

#### **4. To make effort and to believe**

Next, the element for the development of human capital for women is to make effort and to believe. A woman with a good attitude is one that always makes an effort and to always believes. Allah s.w.t had illustrated the concept of effort and belief in the story of Maryam a.s. This was explained when Allah s.w.t said:

That means: "But he called her from below her, "Do not grieve; your Lord has provided beneath you a stream. And shake toward you the trunk of the palm tree; it will drop upon you ripe, fresh dates."

(Surah Maryam, 19:24-25)

This verse came down after the previous verse that also states about Maryam's anxiousness and worries about birthing a child. Therefore, Allah s.w.t had prepared a stream and palm tree as a supply for her (Ibn Kathir, 2000; al-Tabari, 1997). However, without the effort to get it, Maryam would not be able to enjoy the water or dates that were prepared by Allah s.w.t. HAMKA (1982) commented on the verse by stating that the command of Allah s.w.t towards Maryam is to show effort in getting something. This is because, without effort, the things that one wants cannot be achieved.

In addition to that, Maryam is a devout woman who always worships Allah s.w.t and always gifted with the blessings of Allah s.w.t with the strength to worship Allah s.w.t tirelessly. This can be observed when one day when the prophet Zakaria a.s entered Maryam's prayer room to send food, there was already food. The prophet Zakaria a.s was shocked when he saw the food. This repeated a few times and the prophet Zakaria a.s asked Maryam. Maryam answered that the food was from Allah s.w.t and Allah s.w.t will give provisions to whomever He wants without calculation (Arifin, 2975:5-6).

Al-Qurtubi (1961) explained the mistakes of some men in explaining the concept of tawakal (to believe). This is because they often forget the concept of effort before believing in Allah s.w.t. Such instances will cause certain desires to remain unfulfilled. According to Quraish Shihab (2001:260), Islam puts effort and belief on the same concept and both are inter-dependant on each other. A Muslim is required to make an effort and at the same time to wait for the result as set by Allah s.w.t.

Islam also holds that the effort made by a person is within their capabilities (Ikhwan, 2015:56; Quraish Shihab, 2001). This is because a human's capabilities in certain issues are limited. Therefore, Allah's command towards Maryam in the story was based upon her own capability as a pregnant woman. This is also affected by her state of being alone and needing life supply to continue living (al-Qurtubi, 1961). Thus, when shaping human capital of women, there must be confidence in the provision bestowed by Allah s.w.t. The confidence must be instilled together alongside the concept of believing in all the sincere efforts carried out solely for Allah s.w.t.

#### 4. Preserving self-dignity

In the context of women development, a Muslim individual, specifically, a woman must control herself from conducting non-permissible acts in Islam. According to al-Shiddieqy (2011), a woman must try her best to avoid dishonourable acts like adultery, in fact, she is prohibited from even approaching the act. As one of the recorded stories of women in the al-Quran, Allah s.w.t has stated about the characteristics of Maryam that had to preserve her self-dignity by prohibiting herself from committing acts of dishonour. This was explained when Allah s.w.t said:

That means: “And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity, so We blew into [her garment] through Our angel...”

(Surah at-Tahrim, 28:12)

Based on the translation by Ibn Kathir (2000), this verse shows the honour of a woman that is Maryam whose dignity was protected from committing acts prohibited in Islam. Eventhough she was accused of many things, Maryam remained patience over everything. The choosing of Maryam in this matter shows the nobility of a man that always preserve their dignity while at the same time was being accused by the Jews (al-Qurtubi, 1961). Maryam was also calm facing all the reactions because she believed that she did not do anything wrong.

According to Rahman (1993:166), Islam honours women by emphasising their self-worth especially in front of men. A woman's honour and nobility in Islam includes several aspects including communication, marriage, and modesty. Al-Qaradawi (2012) stated that preserving self-dignity is one of the branches of Islamic ethics. By preserving their dignity, an individual will have an admirable ethic and will be distanced from dishonourable actions.

Therefore, Allah s.w.t had recorded the story of Maryam as a sign of the preservation of chastity from coming acts of dishonour. This characterisation is one of the human capital stated in the al-Quran especially involving women. Thus, women with a high human capital put self-dignity as one of the main core of life. This is an honour specifically reserved for women.

#### Conclusion

Islam prioritises human development, especially for women. The desired development must possess a balance between spiritual and physical. Development in Islam is where development is for men. This is different than the West that emphasises men for development. Human development must be a carried out constantly to build self-potential that is present in the aspects of physical, spiritual, emotion and intellect. Development carried out through the wealth of the world is not one that increases a man's faith and piety towards Allah s.w.t instead it is one that led man astray from the true law of Islam. Hence, Muslim individuals specifically women must not enslave their life solely for pleasure to the point of abandoning the Hereafter.

When it is pointed out that elements for the development of human capital for women based on the story of Maryam are to obey the commands of Allah s.w.t, *'uzlah* (self-isolation), the religious obligations, to make effort and believe as well as to maintain self-respect, these must be prioritised by the women of today. These elements of development must be applied in their daily life with wisdom so that the development that was carried out is one of a high quality in all aspects of the women's life.

### Acknowledgement

Special appreciation is owed to Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) & Research Management, Innovation & Commercialization Centre (RMIC) UniSZA.

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