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Economic verses on the privateness of work from an Islamic perspective

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze Qur'anic economic verses concerning the virtues of work. Work is a central activity in the production process that significantly influences daily life. This study employs a qualitative method, with primary data drawn from Qur'anic verses and classical exegeses by *mufassir*. Secondary data is obtained from relevant literature, including publications and written narratives addressing economic themes related to work ethics in Islam. The data is analyzed descriptively to present findings aligned with the objectives. The results show that Islam places great emphasis on the virtue of work, as reflected in verses such as Surah Al-Bayyinah (5) and Surah At-Taubah (105). These verses provide ethical and spiritual guidance for Muslims to engage in diligent, sincere, and accountable labor, knowing that their efforts are witnessed by Allah, His Messenger, and the believers. Surah At-Taubah (105) stresses the importance of working with seriousness and competence, while Surah At-Taubah (111) affirms divine reward for all efforts and sacrifices, both material and spiritual. Surah Al-Bayyinah (5) highlights the necessity of sincerity in all forms of worship, including work. This study concludes that from an Islamic perspective, work is not only a means of livelihood but also a form of worship that carries ethical and eschatological significance.

Keywords: Al-Bayyinah; At-Taubah; production; work; sincerity

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a comprehensive religion that regulates every aspect of human life, including economic affairs. Work holds a prominent position in Islam, not only as a means to fulfill basic needs but also as an act of worship ('ibādah) that is highly esteemed by Allah ﷺ. As a fundamental element in the production process, work has a broad meaning. Natural resources, regardless of their abundance, are of no value unless

processed and utilized through human effort. The universe provides limitless potential, but it is human labor that transforms this potential into real benefit.

Islam strongly encourages its followers to be productive and engage in various economic activities such as farming, gardening, aquaculture, industry, and trade. Through work, individuals can generate goods and services while earning a livelihood for themselves and their families, thus avoiding a life of dependency. Moreover, engaging in production enables individuals to maintain their dignity and independence.

Previous studies have suggested several key insights. First, Islam is not only a heavenly religion but also one that can be applied practically in daily life. As such, Islam views work as a natural and essential human function. Humans are essentially beings who strive, and in principle, they will not gain anything without putting in effort. Therefore, the idea that one's entry into heaven or hell is disconnected from one's worldly actions is misguided. Rather, individuals are expected to work and strive for beneficial and positive outcomes, as Allah ﷺ promises a better life to those who do good (Anafarhanah, 2016).

Second, many economic systems, including Islamic economics, place a strong emphasis on the world of labor, recognizing work as a key driver of economic activity on both micro and macro levels. At the individual level, work is essential for survival. A person's drive, motivation, and ability to work will also determine their overall well-being (*hayāt tayyibah*). Working also affirms human dignity before Allah and allows individuals to participate in the divinely ordained cycle of sustenance (*sunnatullāh*)—offering benefit to themselves and to others (Hasmy, 2019).

Furthermore, studies by Zulfahry Abu Hasmy highlight that individuals must be able to harness labor potential both within themselves and from their environment to remain productive. Key indicators for measuring productivity include capability, improvement in outcomes, work ethic, personal growth, quality, and efficiency (Hasmy, 2019).

These findings collectively affirm that working is a natural part of human existence according to Islam. Individuals must strive to fulfill their life needs continuously and productively. However, based on a review of existing literature, there remains a lack of specific research focusing on Qur'anic economic verses that explore the virtues and values associated with work. This article seeks to address this gap.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach to conduct an in-depth analysis of economic verses in the Qur'an that emphasize the virtue of work. Qualitative methods are used to explore and interpret social phenomena by focusing on meanings and context, rather than numerical measurements. This approach is particularly suitable for uncovering theological and ethical perspectives within Islamic teachings.

The primary data in this study consists of verses from the Qur'an related to the virtue of work, along with classical and contemporary interpretations by *mufassir*. Secondary data is drawn from a range of literature including academic journals, articles, and books that discuss Islamic economic principles in connection with labor and productivity.

The data collection technique involves comprehensive literature review, tracing relevant Qur'anic verses and analyzing their interpretations. This includes identifying recurring themes and ethical messages embedded in the verses. The data is then

analyzed using descriptive analysis, allowing the researcher to summarize and explain the content in relation to the study's objectives.

As this research is qualitative in nature, it emphasizes the depth of understanding over generalization. The interpretive framework adopted here centers on Islamic values, particularly the integration of economic activity with religious obligation and ethical responsibility. Ultimately, this method allows for a thorough exploration of how Qur'anic teachings provide normative foundations for work as both a worldly necessity and a form of worship.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Economic verses about the precisions of work

Economic verses in the Qur'an refer to those that convey divine guidance and values related to economic activities. These include principles of justice in trade, prohibition of *ribā* (usury), obligations of *zakāh* and *infaq*, and directives concerning the lawful earning of a livelihood. One of the key verses addressing the command to work is found in Surah At-Taubah, verse 105:

وَقُلِّ اعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرِيَ اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۖ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَى عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُبَيِّنُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ
(Surah At-Taubah, 9:105)

This verse serves as a reminder for all Muslims to exert sincere effort in their work, to uphold ethical standards, and to recognize the moral and spiritual significance of labor. It emphasizes that every human action is observed by Allah, His Messenger, and the believers, and that all deeds—visible or hidden—will be accounted for in the Hereafter.

According to the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (context of revelation), this verse is closely related to the preceding verses (Qur'an 9:102–104), which stress the importance of repentance, charity, and sincere deeds. It was revealed in the aftermath of the Battle of Tabuk, when the Prophet ﷺ was informed about companions who had tied themselves to a pole as a form of penance. Upon receiving divine permission, the Prophet ﷺ released and forgave them, highlighting that Allah commands righteous action along with internal repentance (bacaanmadani.com, 2024).

In the interpretation of this verse, scholars note its profound ethical implications: it urges individuals to remain self-aware and mindful of their conduct, as all human effort will be judged. The verse affirms that working is not only a social obligation but a spiritual duty. One's labor is under divine scrutiny, and every effort, whether noble or flawed, will be judged accordingly. This aligns human endeavor with eschatological accountability.

Furthermore, the Qur'an encourages believers to use the blessings of creation, including loved ones and nature, as motivation to improve performance and strive for excellence. Muslims are commanded to earn their sustenance through lawful means, to avoid prohibited acts, and to work with integrity. It is through consistent and sincere effort that Allah promises reward, both in this life and the Hereafter.

Another verse that reinforces the ethics of work is Surah Al-Bayyinah, verse 5:
وَمَا أَمْرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْدُوا اللَّهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لِهِ الدِّينُ ۚ هُنَّفَاءٌ وَيُقْنِمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْثِرُوا الرِّزْكَوْهُ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْفَحِيمَةِ
(Surah Al-Bayyinah, 98:5)

This verse underscores that all acts—including labor—must be performed with sincere devotion to Allah alone. Without sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), any deed becomes hollow and devoid of lasting value, like dust on a smooth rock that is blown away by the wind. The goal of working in Islam is not merely to fulfill material needs, but to seek the pleasure (*ridā*) of Allah ﷺ.

The Qur'an thus provides both ethical orientation and spiritual motivation for work. In Islamic thought, every effort—whether physical, intellectual, or financial—is potentially a form of worship if it is rooted in sincere intention and executed with honesty. Work is elevated from a mundane necessity to a sacred duty and a pathway to divine reward.

Correlation of verses with the privilege of work

Surah At-Taubah (9): 105

The correlation between Surah At-Taubah verse 105 and the virtue of work lies in its ethical and eschatological implications. This verse asserts that all deeds—whether good or bad—have consequences and are subject to divine observation. It invites self-reflection and encourages Muslims to uphold discipline and sincerity in their work. The verse states that every human effort is monitored by Allah, His Messenger, and the community of believers, and that each individual will be held accountable for their actions.

The core messages of this verse include:

1. **Self-introspection:** Individuals must consistently evaluate their conduct and intentions.
2. **Moral consequences:** Every action bears consequences, whether positive or negative.
3. **Divine supervision:** Allah constantly observes human behavior and effort.
4. **The obligation to strive:** Engaging in productive effort is a religious and existential obligation.
5. **Divine reward and judgment:** Every deed will be assessed and recompensed accordingly.

Islamic scholars interpret this verse as a divine directive to exert genuine effort in all endeavors. Amri Amir, in *Islamic Economics and Finance*, highlights that the verse not only commands action but also offers a moral incentive: reward for righteous labor. The motivation to work must be directed toward attaining Allah's pleasure, for it is this intention that determines whether the outcome will be rewarded or punished (Amir, 2023).

Surah Al-Bayyinah (98): 5

Similarly, Surah Al-Bayyinah verse 5 emphasizes that all acts, including work, must be performed solely for Allah ﷺ and with absolute sincerity. The verse addresses the essential principle of *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity), which is the foundation of all valid worship. Without it, any form of effort or devotion loses its spiritual significance.

According to *Tafsir Al-Azhar* by Buya Hamka, this verse serves as a reminder that true worship involves not only formal rituals but also sincere intentions in all aspects of life, including economic activity. The verse prohibits *shirk* (associating partners with

Allah) and calls for pure, unadulterated devotion. Hence, work—when done sincerely and lawfully—qualifies as an act of *dīn al-qayyimah* (upright religion).

From this perspective, working is not merely an economic necessity but a spiritual endeavor. Its goals extend beyond material satisfaction to include accountability, self-development, fulfilling social responsibilities, and most importantly, the pursuit of Allah's pleasure (*mardātillāh*).

Understanding work in Islamic perspective

In Islamic teachings, work encompasses all human actions—both individual and collective—that aim to fulfill worldly or spiritual goals. Work is not limited to material production; rather, it includes all constructive efforts that serve a beneficial purpose. Under certain circumstances, collective work may even be superior to individual efforts due to its broader impact and communal benefit.

In terms of moral valuation, human actions are divided into two categories: *ṣāliḥ* (righteous) deeds and sinful acts. Within this framework, work—when performed with sincere intention and in accordance with Islamic principles—can attain the status of worship (*ibādah*). Conversely, idleness or refusal to engage in productive effort is deemed blameworthy.

Islam encourages a balanced regulation of all aspects of human activity: work, worship, trade, and rest. Each of these components must be approached with the proper intention and discipline. The Islamic work ethic emphasizes beginning every task with sincere intention for Allah ﷺ, pursuing it with enthusiasm, and maintaining strong conviction that optimal effort will yield positive outcomes—both materially and spiritually. When work is performed within these boundaries, it becomes not only productive but also blessed (*barakah*) and spiritually meaningful.

To meet their needs and fulfill their responsibilities, Muslims must possess personal qualities such as competence, precision, integrity, and accountability. These align with the moral and legal framework of Islamic ethics. Therefore, the value of work in Islam is not merely utilitarian but also spiritual; it protects individuals from worldly hardship and contributes to their preparation for the afterlife.

The concept of '*amal* (action or deed) in Islam reflects the broader meaning of work as a means of self-actualization and devotion. A Muslim's work reflects their character and intent, and it serves as a means to attain closeness to Allah. Islam upholds the pursuit of lawful wealth as honorable, provided that the means are ethical and the purpose aligns with religious values.

Ultimately, Islam dignifies work by associating it with worship and purpose. It recognizes that human beings labor not only to fulfill their basic needs but also to realize divine objectives. Work, therefore, is not just a survival mechanism, but a path to dignity, morality, and transcendence.

CONCLUSION

The significance of work in Islam is firmly established through various Qur'anic economic verses, particularly Surah Al-Bayyinah (98:5) and Surah At-Taubah (9:105). These verses emphasize that beyond fulfilling one's material needs, work represents a noble act of worship. Islam views work as a means of embodying religious values, achieving self-sufficiency, and contributing positively to society.

Surah At-Taubah (9:105) provides clear guidance for Muslims to work diligently and competently, knowing that all actions are witnessed by Allah, His Messenger, and fellow believers. The verse reinforces that work is subject to divine evaluation, and that each individual bears responsibility for their deeds. Similarly, Surah At-Taubah (9:111) assures that every form of sacrifice—whether financial or physical—is rewarded by Allah, reflecting a divine assurance of justice and recompense.

Surah Al-Bayyinah (98:5), on the other hand, reminds believers that work must be performed with *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity), directed solely toward the pleasure of Allah. Without sincere intention, actions lose their spiritual merit and permanence.

Taken together, these verses provide an ethical and theological foundation for understanding work from an Islamic perspective. They affirm that work is not merely a utilitarian endeavor but an expression of devotion and moral responsibility. A Muslim is encouraged to work hard, to make sacrifices for the good of others, and to maintain sincerity in all aspects of labor. Ultimately, the Islamic worldview elevates work as both a form of *'ibādah* and a vehicle for achieving personal fulfillment and divine reward.

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