

# FREE-RIDERISM AMONG ACADEMICIANS: AN ETHICAL OF ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

*Many academics emphasize free-riderism issues in academic writing. They give the various factors of the problem, among which are high KPI requirements and compete for promotion. This study is to identify non-ethical elements according to Islamic perspective in free-riderism among academicians and therefore to provide solution methods to prevent free-riderism practices. This study is qualitative in which data is collected through library research, i.e. by referring to authoritative newspapers, Islamic ethics books, constitutions and journals. The data were analyzed using document and content analysis. The findings show that there are three non-ethical elements in free-riderism practices that include treason (khiyanah), fraud and trick (hilah). The findings also show that there are ethical values of Islam to be applied in order to prevent free-riderism practices among academics that include intent (niyyah), wasatiyyah, trust (amanah) and courtesy (ihsan).*

**Keywords:** Islamic Ethics, Free-Riderism, Academicians, Malaysia, Legal.

## INTRODUCTION

In line with the rising ranks of universities in Malaysia both at the local and international levels is a remarkable achievement (Abdullah, 2018). This increase is because the policy of the university is today which is fully autonomous, wants to meet the ranking criteria to compete with universities at the international level. One of the criteria that need to be met is to multiply indexed publishing quantities. The university has included these criteria as a compulsory assignment of lecturers and compulsory requirements for graduates at post-graduate levels (KPM, 2015). Although there is a positive impact on the policy, it is undeniable that there is a negative impact. According to Yusof (2016), in an urgent situation to pursue ranks, names and positions because of the “urgent” system pursuing university ranking and achieving Key Performance Index (KPI) respectively, through the volume and quantity of publications to be published in the ISI, Scopus and ERA for an academic scholar within a year, has expressed concern over the deteriorating moral and ethical values among university academic staff.

Among the moral values that concern is “free-riderism” practices among academics who are so serious and uncontrolled has attracted some academics such as Salleh (2011), Yusof (2016), Aminah (2017), Khairunneezam (2017) and Kairuldin (2017). According to LaFollette (1992), the term “free-riderism” comes from terminology honorary authorship or ghost authorship. Honorary authorship is a practice of awarding to individuals in the form of writing

names in writing without significant contributions. According to Hashim (2010), a “*free-riderism*” term is termed as guest writers, honorary authors, and ghostwriters. Usually the author is an individual guest, who holds a position or influence who does not contribute in writing but is listed as a writer. The perch writer goes without the knowledge of the individual while he does not contribute in writing. While ghostwriters or ghost authorships are writers, who hide or hide their names over certain factors.

According to Salleh (2011), there are seven conditions to qualify someone to put his name in academic writing. First, actively involved in generating the authenticity of academic writing ideas. Second, it is necessary to develop academic writing designs actively. Third, responsible for observing and collecting data. Fourth, academics play a leadership role according to their respective capacities in carrying out the study. Fifth is involved in the process of writing academic materials, not only against the draft manuscript but revision of the manuscript. Sixth, responsible for the final manuscript of academic writing. Seventh, able to defend the academic publications according to their professional discipline.

In Malaysia, this “*free-riderism*” or honorary authorship is widely used among academics in various fields of study (Yusoff, 2016). Salleh (2011) lists five forms of “*free-riderism*” practices that occur among academics in Malaysia. First, put the supervisor's name upon the supervisor's request in writing that done entirely by the student. Second, put the supervisor's name by appreciation to the supervisor in reviewing academic writing work. Third, there is a pact between academicians to put their names on the written academic writing. Fourth, put a friend's name or contact to help them despite not contributing anything in the academic writing. Fifth, put the name of a friend or other academic contact because of the sharing cost of the presentation or publication.

The issues as above mentioned are contrary to the Islamic Ethical in regarding the dissemination of knowledge in Islamic Perspective. The knowledge should be acquired and disseminated with pure and godly intention. For that, Islam has comprehensive in terms of its approach to knowledge. Academician must realize their responsibilities to do something always in good manners and in ethical ways, either in obtaining or disseminating of knowledge. So that, a good character that's promotes virtuous action is manifest or embodied in academician (Huda et al., 2016). Since religion is also an important feature of the country, then every job in the civil service of the country should be in line with Islamic values. Hence, this problem should not be the case for the highly respected society of the public because academicians are expert and are referred to as scholars by society.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses document analysis to obtain data. According to Jasmi (2012), document analysis is a method of obtaining relevant information from printed material in the form of documents. Hence, researchers conduct document analysis such as mainstream newspapers, journals, religious books on “*free-riderism*” practices and “*free-riderism*” practices based on Islamic ethical perspectives. The data collected will be analyzed using the content analysis method. According to Yusof (2004), content analysis is a research technique by concluding systematically and objectively based on the data obtained in the form of documents.

Accordingly, based on research on the collected data, researchers will issue non-ethical elements in “*free-riderism*”.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Non-Ethical Elements in Free-Riderism

Islam prohibits the use of an illegal way to achieve good goals. This is based on the method of Usul Syarak which means:

*"To achieve the goal cannot use the wrong way" (Al-Bu'la, 2012).*

There is no doubt that pursuing a good position for local universities in the international arena is a good thing. Similarly, achieving the annual work targets set by employers through KPIs. However, it cannot ignore ethical principles that are one of the three religious pillars apart from aqidah and sharia. Referring to the problems found in “*free-riderism*” practices, the researchers found that there were three unethical elements in the practice of treachery, fraud and trick.

Treason may be intended as an act of do not carry out responsibilities and trust granted to a person whether or do not do it, do it without much enthusiasm or deliberately executing it imperfectly. Al-Qurtubi (2006) defines treacherous acts as cruel and hides something. Treason can also mean the reduction, the fraud, the concealment and the secrecy. According to al-Zahabi (2013), treason is one of the major sins. There is a link between treachery and “*free-riderism*” where academics are entrusted by employers to produce academic articles as a major task but do not do so well just to put the name in an article which is endeavored by others without academic contributions from the academics.

Cheating is a bad character and bad deed. According to al-Zahabi (2013), the law of deceit is an illegal and great sin based on the Quranic verses and hadiths. Deceit or lie is associated with a “*free-riderism*” practice when one puts his name in an article without any contribution directly. This is because the name placed in an article is to inform the public that the article is the result of the research. Frauds also occur when someone claims that he is doing research in an article either directly or indirectly as telling the other by speech or writing.

According to Ibn-Qudamah (2014), a trick is an act that externally permitted to acquire the unlawful things. Such an act is a deceitful way of achieving the purpose of allowing what is forbidden by Allah. The trick is illegal according to the *ijmak* of Companions. The link between trick and “*free-riderism*” is although the practice is voluntary, the author of the article allows the name of the other person to be placed without any direct contribution, but the consent is forbidden because Allah forbids helping with unethical matter (Qur'an 5:2) In addition, although “*free-riderism*” are named as cooperation in business affairs, it is still prohibited because Islam values the contents and objectives of an act, not just names or practices.

## Solution Suggestions on Free-Riderism Issues

“*Free-riderism*” practices can bring negative impact from various angles, either from the point of religion and work ethics. It is also difficult to know by others because it is done in secret, so the researchers propose some concepts to be applied as internal supervisors in human beings to avoid “*free-riderism*” practices that apply elements of intention, *wasatiyyah*, trust and courtesy.

The intent is a very important element in Islam until religion recognizes such a practice based on one's intentions. It is based on the Prophet's Word which means, "Every practice is accompanied by intent" (Al-Bugha & Misto, 2009). Hence, the element of intent should be taken into account by every researcher as if good intentions but incorrect actions are wrong. If the intention is wrong but with the right act is wrong. However, “*syarak*” wants the right intentions and deeds. Intention is an inner element of human thought and heart that will give birth to deeds. Hence, if someone thinks to do well, then he/she will do a good thing. Therefore, if the researcher thinks to conduct a transparent and honest study, then he/she will avoid making a “*free-riderism*” in his/her study.

According to Kamali (2015), *Wasatiyyah* is an important element in Islamic ethics; *wasatiyyah* is something that requires proper right by taking the middle path so not too extreme or lack. While Kamali (2015) defines the *wasatiyyah* as a fair justice that the fair approach would be better if it were in the middle which is balanced and fair. The concept of *wasatiyyah* is important for the attention of policymakers and academics. “*Free-riderism*” practices can be avoided when the university takes the concept of *wasatiyyah* that is moderate and fair in setting policies for the KPIs of academics. This is because the enthusiasm in pursuing the rankings has burdened the lecturers KPIs by increasing the number of research papers that need to be produced each year so that lecturers need to think of a short negative way by doing “*free-riderism*” because there are other tasks that need to be fulfilled such as teaching and supervision. Likewise, academicians need to be moderate in pursuit of rank and awards. This is because the moderate attitude allows academic members to be fair in their career i.e. doing every job according to their ability. The new Education Minister also supports that the university needs to take a moderate approach (Awani, 2018).

Trust (*amanah*) is one of the key elements of Islamic ethics. Trust means to carry out the responsibilities that are perfectly and honestly respected. According to Al-Qurtubi (2006), trust is mandatory for every human being. To avoid being involved with unethical “*free-riderism*”, academics need to apply the trustworthiness in their self all the times, especially when conducting research tasks. This is because it will educate academicians to carry out their research with full trust without including unethical elements because they do not want to be involved with treason elements that are prohibited by Islamic ethics.

Ihsan means to do good, improve affairs and diligently implement (Zuhaili, 2011). Zuhaili (2011) states that the claim of Ihsan is in every case, especially when undertaking entrusted work. To avoid “*free-riderism*” practices, academics need to be diligent as one of the hallmarks of doing research. Without persistence, a researcher will find a shortcut to perform his job by doing “*free-riderism*”.

## CONCLUSION

“Free-riderism” even though externally it is a good thing to do which to help one another among academics, it is an act that is not in line with Islamic ethics because there are elements of treachery, fraud and trick that Islam prohibits. Hence, in order to prevent “free-riderism” practices from being widespread until it can be damaging development of human capital and eliminating the concept of scholarship among academics in Malaysia, the researcher proposes that elements of intent, *wasatiyyah* and courtesy apply to those involved in the field of research. This is because they act as a guard to prevent an individual to make a “free-riderism” that is difficult to know by others.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study is funded by the Research University grant of Universiti Sains Malaysia (1001/PHUMANITI/816290), Penang.

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