

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Concept and Scale Development of *Karimah* Work Ambition

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Keywords

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Abstract.

Purpose: This study aims to examine a new model that fills the gaps and limitations of the previous concept, namely work ambition, which is inconsistent with Islamic values. This study presents the concept of *karimah* work ambition that can be accepted by Muslim employees so that it will help them achieve their best career without violating Islamic values.

Methodology: The method used is a simple random sampling of employees of the Navigation District in Semarang City, Indonesia. The results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) $N = 80$ indicate a scale capable of measuring *karimah* work ambition. The results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (First-Order CFA) show that all indicators can explain latent constructs with outer loading values > 0.7 . The structured *karimah* work ambition scale has passed the psychometric property test, so it can be applied.

Findings: The results of the study show that *karimah* work ambition is built on four dimensions, namely *amānah* (trustworthiness) in dealing with challenges, *rida* (acceptance) to the results of self-development, *shobaro* (Patient) in will and *shiddiq* (Honest) In will.

Originality: This article is perhaps the only one that explores the concept of work ambition based on Islamic values.

Practical and Social Implication: This research will provide leaders with knowledge on how to manage the ambitions of their employees without deviating from Islamic value. In addition, this research will provide knowledge to employees about how ambitious they are to achieve their careers based on Islamic values.

KAUJIE Classification: P2, T5

JEL Classification: O15, Z12

INTRODUCTION

In Resources-Based Theory, differences in organizational performance are seen as differences in income caused by the resources owned at different level of efficiency (Barney, 1991). However, the Resource-Based Theory has many weaknesses: it does not explain managerial

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implications, does not explain how and where to get resources, and views all resources as the same so that they are not treated differently (Connor, 2002; Priem & Butler, 2001). Resources that are seen as the same are resources that are tangible assets such as machinery and buildings, while intangible resources such as human capital need to be managed differently. The concept of human capital is considered an important asset for individuals and organizations; however, according to Marginson (2019), this concept has limitations and weaknesses, namely that it only assumes that individuals always make decisions that maximize their economic benefits, whereas in Islam it explains more deeply that the best individuals are those who can benefit others and have transcendental values, namely individuals who aim to please Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala. In addition, the concept of human capital only assumes that individual income is fully obtained from their skills and knowledge, whereas in Islam, sustenance or life is given by Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala.

Humans have different personal attributes from one individual to another; therefore, different management is needed. Van Ruler et al. (2017) stated that strategy-making can contribute by utilizing skills, competencies, and personal attributes in organizational decision-making, and one of the important attributes of personality is ambition (McGregor et al., 2004). However, ambition from a management perspective is still limited due to a lack of understanding by managers about what must be done to help employees fulfil their ambitions (El Baroudi et al., 2017). According to O'Leary (1997), individuals who are ambitious in their careers will be very competitive and measure their career success by reward, rank, or promotion. Ashby & Schoon (2010) found that ambitious individuals achieve higher status than those who lack ambition. In addition, Barsukova (2016) found that individuals who are ambitious include feeling competitive, comparing themselves to others, and depending on achievement. According to Jones et al. (2017) ambitious individuals set higher standards for themselves (e.g., higher job levels, higher salaries, and more challenging tasks), and they are generally more successful than those who are less ambitious. Based on the literature, it can be concluded that the concept of work ambition has mostly transactional goals, meanwhile ambition in Islam which only aims to achieve position and rewards or worldly interests is prohibited, as was maintained by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Ibn Majah:

“Whoever has ambition only in this world, Allah will confound his affairs and make him fear poverty constantly, and he will not get anything from this world except that which has been decreed for him. Whoever is ambitious in the Hereafter, Allah will settle his affairs for him and make him feel content with his lot, and his provision and worldly gains will undoubtedly come to him”. (Al-Albani, 2007)

Therefore, work ambition is an important attribute for employees to achieve career or personal success without violating Islamic values. Employees who have *karimah* work ambition are a resource and an important asset for the organization because employees who have *karimah* work ambition are assets that are difficult to imitate and become an independent driver for employees to improve their performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personal Attributes of Work Ambition

One of the resources that may have a valuable influence on the strategy implementation process and also have a positive influence on strategy implementation is human capital. Human capital is a form of intangible capital such as machinery and technology. Human capital has an important role in all organizational activities. The main outcome of investment in people is change that is manifested at the individual level in the form of increased performance and at the organizational level in terms of productivity (Strober, 1990). In their study, Bontis & Fitz-enz (2002) observed that intelligence, desire, positive attitude, commitment, learning ability, talent, imagination, creativity, and motivation to share knowledge make the difference that leads to innovation and is an important asset for the development process in an organization. Bontis & Fitz-enz (2002) state that human capital is a combination of intelligence, skills, and expertise that can make a difference to an organization. Human capital is an intrinsic human productive ability, where the ability can be increased through investments such as education, training, and health (Eide & Showalter, 2010) while (Lau et al., 2012) identified a set of human capital needed in the twenty-first century, namely knowledge, skills, and attributes, Djomo & Sikod (2012) state that human capital consists of competence, knowledge, and personality attributes. Thus, it can be concluded that human capital is the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes possessed by humans.

McGregor et al. (2004) assert that personal attributes consisting of being a facilitator, approachable, charismatic, and ambition are needed to do the job as an influence of human capital. In their study, (Elchardus & Smits, 2008) define ambitious people as those who have plans and goals for their professional careers. Barsukova (2016) states that ambition is a person's desire in the form of recognition in various fields of activity, while Bui et al. (2021) define career ambition as a universal motivation for achievement both in career and personal success. This definition is broad and reflects the role of motivation in career ambition. So it can be concluded that ambition is a person's desire in the form of recognition to achieve their professional career goals as planned.

In a study by Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller (2012), ambition is mentioned as being different from awareness in general and achievement motivation in particular. Highly motivated people will appreciate doing a good job regardless of whether it's recognized with a promotion or raise, whereas highly interested people will be very interested in ensuring that effort is linked to success, such as a promotion or raise.

According to Bandura (1999) individuals who have characteristics that tend to lead to success may be more ambitious because they have greater expectations of achieving success. Meanwhile, Ederer & Pataconi (2010) explain that ambitious individuals will demand to set higher standards for themselves. Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) have shown in their study that ambition is related to behaviors that support job achievement, and the results show that despite the negative connotations of ambition, there are positive life outcomes from ambition. The more ambitious participants did not appear to be made miserable or dissatisfied by their ambition. On the other hand, more ambitious individuals have higher levels of achievement in education and work. El Baroudi et al. (2017) shows in his study that ambitious

employees tend to care about their work and personal interests and tend to have the behaviors to achieve greater work. Meanwhile, in the study of [Cimirotić et al. \(2017\)](#), it is mentioned that one of the supporting factors of individual progress is ambition. Several item scales for measuring ambition according to [Portegijs et al. \(2006\)](#) are: the desire to reach the highest level in work; having ambitions to achieve higher positions; challenges; the importance of self-actualization and self-development; and setting high goals. According to [Barsukova \(2016\)](#) the characteristics of ambition consist of goals, achievement motivation, self-attitudes, attitudes towards others, attitudes towards professional activities, self-regulation, and cognitive characteristics. However, management ambition remains limited due to managers' lack of understanding of what to do to help their employees fulfil their ambitions ([El Baroudi et al., 2017](#)).

Akhlaqul Karimah

The word *karimah* is used to indicate commendable moral actions that are shown in daily life activities. According to [Al Ghozali \(1965\)](#) noble morality, or what is usually called *karimah* character, is a good mental state. The human mind in his soul has four levels, and in people who have good character, all levels are still good, moderate, and harmonized with each other. According to [Sa'aduddin \(2006\)](#), there are a number of characteristics that show noble character. These characteristics are in tandem with the spirit of Islam and the spirit of its guidance. These characteristics are universal, always relevant, rational, and collectively responsible, and every action has a reward. In the *ḥadīth* Abu Dawud it is stated:

“The Prophet (PBUH) is the best person in character” ([Al-Albani, 1998](#)).

Another *ḥadīth* that mentions the advantages of someone who has good morals was said by the Prophet (SAW) in the *ḥadīth* of Abu Dawud:

“Nothing is heavier on the scales of charity than good character” ([Al-Albani, 1998](#)).

And in another *ḥadīth*, the Prophet (SAW) in *ḥadīth* Bukhari:

“Verily, the best among you is the one with the best character”.

According to [Abdullah \(2007\)](#) Akhlaqul *karimah* is a commendable behavior that is a sign of the perfection of one's faith in Allah. In another sense, akhlaqul *karimah* is all commendable behavior, which is a sign of the perfection of one's faith in Allah. Good morals (*mahmudah*) are morals that are always under divine control and can bring values. People have to be positive and conducive to the benefit of the others, such as through patience, humility, and all that is good. The above opinion can be interpreted as that Akhlaqul *karimah* is commendable behavior or good behavior, which is a sign of perfection and self-control that brings positive value for ourselves or for those around us. Islam provides clear benchmarks for employees who have good morals. In determining a good deed, Islam pays attention in terms of how to do the deed. Someone who has good intentions but does it in the wrong way is considered a despicable act. This means that it can be concluded that akhlaqul *karimah* is all good behavior in daily activities exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) according to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.

The indicator of morality according to Al Ghozali (1965) in his book *Ihya Ulumuddin*, which has been translated, states that morality is a guide for human beings to have character and mental and personality as well as shown by the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In addition, actions that are considered good in Islam are actions that are in accordance with the instructions of the Qur'ān and the actions of His Messenger. The categories of commendable morals or *karimah* are quite a lot, including *ikhlas* (doing something for Allah), *tawakkal* (surrendering to Allah), *syukur* (thanking for the blessings of Allah), *shiddiq* (true/honest), *amānah* (trustworthiness), *'adl* (fair), *afw* (forgiveness), *wafa* (keep promises), *iffah* (maintaining self-respect), *haya'* (having a sense of shame), *syaja'ah* (brave), patient (patience), *rahmah* (compassion), *sakha'* (generosity), *ta'awun* (helper), *iqtisad* (frugal), *tawadu'* (humble), *mur'uah* (care for the feelings of others), *qana'ah* (feeling enough with the gift of Allah), *rifq* (mercy), and others.

Karimah Work Ambition

Karimah Work Ambition is a person's desire to achieve their best in career and personal success, which is based on *amānah* (trustworthiness) in dealing with challenges, *rida* (acceptance) to the results of self-development, *Shobaro* (patient) in will, and *Shiddiq* (honest) in will. *Karimah* work ambition has the potential to realize human resource performance. Employees who have *karimah* work ambition are required to carry out every activity based on commendable qualities so that employees with *karimah* work ambition can achieve the desired goals using methods that are in accordance with Islamic values. In addition, employees who have *karimah* work ambition will not feel burdened if their desired goals are not achieved because of their pleased attitude.

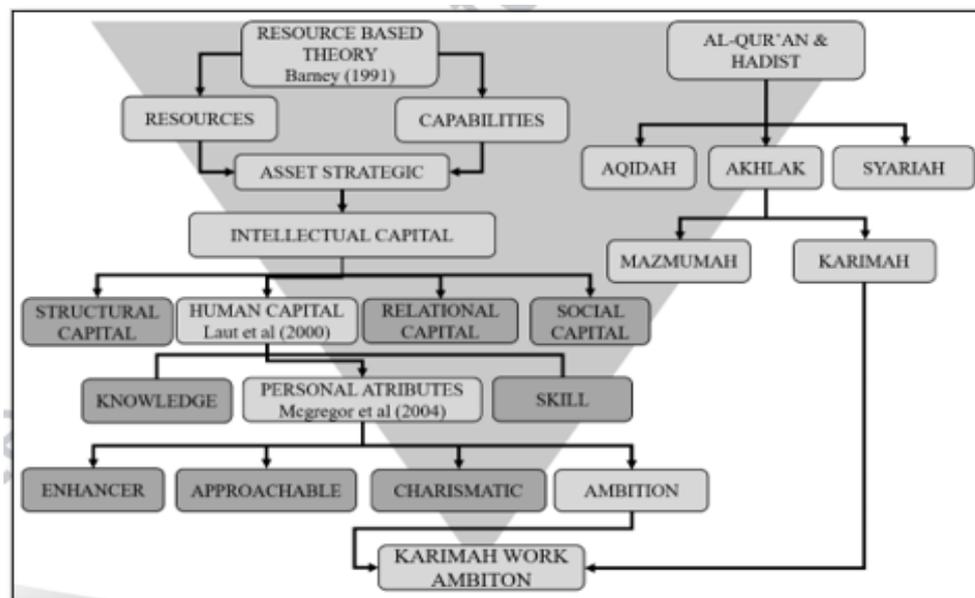


FIGURE 1. Integration work ambition and *karimah* based on Qur'ān & *ḥadīth*

Karimah work ambition is an important variable to trigger the improvement of human

resource performance. El Baroudi et al. (2017) explains that ambitious employees will contribute more to the work done so that it will have an impact on their performance. Bean (2021) explain in their study that employees who have ambition, in general, will try to achieve the desired results, including achieving higher performance. Hirschi & Spurk (2021) concluded in their study that researchers recognize that to motivate employees to improve their performance requires ambition. Therefore, employees who have *karimah* work ambitions will contribute by increasing their performance results through the desired result, but in a way that does not violate Islamic values.

Based on a study on work ambition and *karimah* based on the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, it can be integrated as presented in Figure 1. Based on the above literature review, it can be concluded that ambition is a dimension that plays an important role in the personal attributes of individuals McGregor et al. (2004). Ambition can be an intangible asset that is strategic and difficult to imitate, while *karimah* is a commendable behavior or attitude that must be possessed by all employees, In accordance with the *ḥadīth* of Bukhari, "indeed, the best among you has the best morals" (Al-Utsaimin, 2010). This Karamah behavior is also an important intangible asset for the organization. Therefore, *karimah* work ambition is a solution and contributes to the development of the work ambition concept. *Karimah* Work Ambition limits employees' ambitions to those that do not get out of line and where the hereafter is the main goal. The position achieved in a career is a medium for getting more benefits in the afterlife, where the position obtained can be used to invite kindness to others.

METHODOLOGY AND INITIAL ITEM DEVELOPMENT

This study aims to develop and validate the *karimah* work ambition instrument, which consists of 16 characteristics. Hinkin & Schriesheim (1989) describe the recommended steps in the process of developing a new measurement item scale, starting with developing concepts and defining theoretical constructs. The development of the measurement item scale was done by involving experts in the field of management and experts in the interpretation of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* science. The next step is to test the validity of the internal structure (validity based on internal structure) using exploratory factors analysis (EFA) with SPSS software. According to Hu & Bentler (1998), the purpose of EFA is to determine the latent construct of a series of items in a variable and define the construct of a factor or dimension. After that, testing the measurement model (outer model) to analyze the validity and reliability of the indicators on the latent construct with Smart-PLS software. In this study, the sample used was 80 respondents from the Navigation District employees in Semarang, Indonesia.

VARIMAX Rotation of Items: Data Reduction

Barbuto Jr & Wheeler (2006) used varimax rotation to identify items with a strong and unique loading to the components identified in the analysis and to guide factor reduction. The results of the extraction and reduction of items resulted in 4 factors of the 16 proposed characteristics.

TABLE 1
Varimax Rotation Patterns for *karimah* Work Ambition

Scales	Components			
	1	2	3	4
AMN1	0.67	0.338	0.219	0.115
AMN2	0.656	0.385	0.426	-0.003
AMN3	0.752	0.238	0.336	0.146
AMN4	0.78	0.22	0.154	0.16
AMN5	0.648	0.568	0.232	-0.011
AMN6	0.687	0.174	0.225	0.365
RDA1	0.237	0.765	0.251	0.229
RDA2	0.559	0.581	0.338	-0.042
RDA3	0.279	0.803	0.254	0.087
RDA4	0.275	0.816	0.073	0.257
SBR1	0.386	0.175	0.796	-0.036
SBR2	0.432	0.21	0.761	0.064
SBR3	-0.089	0.146	0.711	0.52
SBR4	0.413	0.253	0.769	0.053
SDQ1	0.433	-0.007	0.17	0.727
SDQ2	0.046	0.416	-0.045	0.731

Notes: AMN = *Amānah* (trustworthiness) in dealing with challenges. RDA = *Rida* (acceptance) to the results of self-development. SBR = *Shobaro* (Patient) in will. SDQ = *Shiddiq* (Honest) in will.

Convergent Validity

PLS-SEM analysis begins with testing the measurement model, then structural testing. Evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) is done by analyzing the validity and reliability of the construct. The construct validity test consisted of convergent validity and discriminant validity tests. The construct validity test can be seen by the outer loading value of each construct, which can then be seen from the relationship of the construct to other variables. The outer loading value obtained can be seen in 2 table.

Based on the table, it can be seen that the outer loading value is above 0.7, which means that it belongs to the category of good validity. This indicates that the relationship between the indicator and the construct is good and acceptable from the point of view of most theories. PLS-SEM also tested the discriminant validity of the constructs measured. This validity test is intended to find out whether the two constructs are really different from other constructs, empirically [Joseph et al. \(2010\)](#). Discriminant validity can be seen from the cross loading value and by comparing the square root of AVE and the correlation between latent constructs. Based on the table 3, the predictive properties of all the given construct relationships are positive and significant, as evidenced by the p-value less than 0.05. It can also be seen from the coefficient of the original sample that it is feasible to be positive and the t value is greater than 1.96 with a significance value of 0.05.

TABLE 2
Convergent Validity

	Amanah	Rida	Patient	Honest
AMN1	0.792			
AMN2	0.858			
AMN3	0.877			
AMN4	0.825			
AMN5	0.86			
AMN6	0.762			
RDA1		0.859		
RDA2		0.857		
RDA3		0.891		
RDA4		0.86		
SBR1			0.838	
SBR2			0.877	
SBR3			0.787	
SBR4			0.88	
SDQ1				0.905
SDQ2				0.722

Notes: AMN = *Amānah* (trustworthiness) in dealing with challenges. RDA = *Rida* (acceptance) to the results of self-development. SBR = *Shobaro* (Patient) in will. SDQ = *Shiddiq* (Honest) in will.

TABLE 3
PLS-SEM Bootstrapping Calculation Result

	O	M	(STDEV)	(O/STDEV)	P Values
AMN1←Amanah	0.792	0.791	0.057	13.917	0
AMN2←Amanah	0.858	0.841	0.069	12.419	0
AMN3←Amanah	0.877	0.867	0.044	19.711	0
AMN4←Amanah	0.825	0.821	0.05	16.533	0
AMN5←Amanah	0.86	0.855	0.051	16.755	0
AMN6←Amanah	0.762	0.766	0.043	17.674	0
RDA1←Rida	0.859	0.844	0.07	12.304	0
RDA2←Rida	0.857	0.853	0.043	20.003	0
RDA3←Rida	0.891	0.877	0.053	16.844	0
RDA4←Rida	0.86	0.84	0.069	12.486	0
SBR1← Shobaro	0.838	0.799	0.113	7.403	0
SBR2← Shobaro	0.877	0.847	0.089	9.886	0
SBR3← Shobaro	0.787	0.786	0.08	9.8	0
SBR4← Shobaro	0.88	0.85	0.08	10.976	0
SDQ1← Shiddiq	0.905	0.907	0.039	23.385	0
SDQ2← Shiddiq	0.722	0.708	0.116	6.238	0

Notes: AMN = *Amānah* (trustworthiness) in dealing with challenges. RDA = *Rida* (acceptance) to the results of self-development. SBR = *Shobaro* (Patient) in will. SDQ = *Shiddiq* (Honest) in will.

Discussion: Refinement of *Karimah* Work Ambition

Based on the results of the EFA and CFA analyses, it can be concluded that the *karimah* work ambition measurement scale has met the psychometric criteria. The *karimah* work ambition scale can be used as a measuring tool because it is proven to be able to measure constructs and is quite reliable when tested. The *karimah* work ambition scale has passed the validity and reliability tests. The results of the factor analysis show four factors derived from the 16 characteristics of *karimah* work ambition, namely Amanah (trustworthiness) in dealing with challenges, *rida* (acceptance) to the results of self-development, *Shobaro* (patient) in will, and *Shiddiq* (honest) in will.

Amānah (trustworthiness) in dealing with challenges is the behavior of employees who work according to their fields and will not accept the work or tasks assigned by the leadership if the task is not in their field and is not in accordance with their competence and expertise. Employees who have work ambitions will accept all assigned work even though the employee is not an expert in the job because what is expected is only material or position. While employees who have *karimah* work ambition will be trustworthiness in facing challenges, one of which is only willing to accept work that can be done. This is in accordance with the words of the Prophet Muhammad Shallaahu Alaihi Wassalam in the *ḥadīth* of Bukhari:

“If a business or job is handed over to people who are not experts, then wait for its destruction”. (Al-Utsaimin, 2010)

This shows the importance, as an employee, of accepting a job or task according to his abilities. Because trust is a big responsibility that will be held accountable by Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta’ala as stated in the Qur’ān Al-Ahzab Verse 72:

“we did offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear its burden and were afraid of it, and man picked it up. Indeed he is unjust (to himself), unaware (of the end)”.

In Ibn Kathir’s commentary, it is stated that this mandate is that if they fulfil it, Allah will reward them, and if they neglect it, Allah will punish them. This shows how hard it is to be responsible for a given position. Employees should, if holding positions, be responsible not only to leaders or humans but to Allah so that in carrying out their activities they will always see the benefits for the hereafter before seeing the benefits in this world.

Rida (acceptance) to the results of self-development is employee satisfaction with the competencies and skills that have been achieved. Employees who are satisfied with the provisions that Allah has given will always feel grateful and accept the competencies and expertise they have acquired. The self-development that has been achieved will be utilized as best as possible, and employees are responsible for the competencies and skills that have been achieved. Employees who have work ambitions, their performance will decrease if the position or career achieved is not in accordance with their competence and expertise. Meanwhile, employees who have the *karimah* to work with ambition will always be satisfied and happy with what they have achieved because they believe that all offerings to Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta’ala will be beneficial in this world and the hereafter, according to the *ḥadīth* of Thabrani:

“indeed, if Allah loves you, He will bring calamity upon them. Whoever is pleased, then he (will get) the pleasure (of Allah). And whoever is displeased, he (will get) wrath (Allah)” (Ath-Thabari, 2011).

Shobaro (Patient) in will is responsible for the process of achieving the desired career. This means that employees who have *karimah* work ambition will be responsible for each stage and process of developing themselves to achieve a career so that each stage is carried out as well as possible. The Word of Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala in the Qur'ān Surah Ali Imran Verse 146:

“Allah loves the steadfast”.

Employees who are responsible for the process of achieving their careers will guard themselves from actions that are prohibited by Sharī'ah so that it is not easy for employees to accept positions or jobs that violate Sharī'ah values, or in other words, do not sacrifice their religion for their careers. Employees who are *shobaro* (Patient) in will will accept the process that has been achieved in their careers. That is, employees accept the process that has been achieved based on pleasure. The stages that have been passed are accepted because the employee believes that what Allah has set is good and beneficial for him. The Word of Allah in the Qur'ān Surah Az-Zumar Verse 10:

“Certainly those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure”.

The verse illustrates that patience has benefits not only in this world but also in the hereafter. If the employee accepts the process that has been achieved in his career, then Allah promises a great reward in the hereafter.

Shiddiq (Honest) in will is the openness of employees to others about the career to be achieved. Employees who have ambition sometimes perceive their co-workers as competitors, so they do not want to share knowledge about the position or career opportunities they want to achieve. While employees who are *Shiddiq* (Honest) in will will be open to colleagues about the career to be achieved, it is expected to be a motivation for their colleagues. In a Muslim *ḥadīth*, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) says:

“Whoever points to goodness, then he will get a reward like those who do it”

Employees who are *shiddiq* (Honest) in will will share information about positions and careers in the organization. This means that employees are willing to open up to their colleagues about the organization's needs regarding existing positions or career opportunities. Knowledge about career opportunities in organizations is difficult to obtain, so it is difficult for employees to set career goals. Therefore, it is necessary to be open to career opportunities. Knowledge of career opportunities can provide opportunities for colleagues to achieve these opportunities. The Word of Allah in Qur'ān Surah At-Taubah Verse 119:

“O you who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful”.

Therefore, employees who are *shiddiq* (Honest) in will want to be open about information needs in the organization will provide benefits to their colleagues so that they can achieve the pleasure of Allah together through achieving the careers needed by the organization.

Limitation and Future Research

The sample used in this study was only 80 respondents so that testing could be carried out by involving more respondents. The object of this research is a government agency so that future research can be extended to organizations and across regions with the type of respondent object in multinational companies.

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