THE QUR'AN AND TIME MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Time is one of the elements that runs parallel with human life. Furthermore, time is something that does not provide a second chance for a person's life, but it does offer an opportunity to plan something, by managing the time one has. Time management, or often referred to as time control, is an issue that is often overlooked. Time management is a method or way for someone to design and plan something regarding the time they have, so that it can be used optimally. The Qur'an, as guidance for humanity, also commands to practice time management. This can be found in Surah Al-Ashr and Surah An-Naba verses 9-11. Surah Al-Ashr elaborates on the command to manage the time one possesses, while Surah An-Naba verses 9-11 explains how to utilize time optimally in daily life.

Keywords*: Time, Time Management, Surah Al-Ashr, Surah An-Naba*

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, as the primary and most important source of Islamic teachings, is recognized for its truth by the Muslim faith. The Qur'an, as the holy book, contains the words of Allah SWT. It was revealed through the angel Jibril to Prophet Muhammad SAW, the Messenger of Allah, gradually with the aim of providing guidance for all Muslims in

their lives to attain well-being in both this world and the hereafter. As a guide for humanity, the Qur'an offers directions such as guidance (Al-Huda), the criterion between right and wrong (Al-Furqan), evidence of truth (Al-Burhan), reminders (Al-Dzikr), healing (Al-Shifa), advice, lessons (Al-Mau'idhah), and mercy (Al-Rahmah). Furthermore, as the final sacred text, the Qur'an functions as a guide for humanity until the end of time, completing previous holy books and serving as the primary source of Islamic teachings brought by Prophet Muhammad SAW. The Qur'an holds a special place compared to the earlier scriptures, as the last sacred book; it has a greater and broader role.

Time is the greatest blessing granted by Allah SWT to His servants. Therefore, humans should use it as effectively as possible to fulfill their duties as Allah's creatures on Earth. Allah frequently swears by different times, such as "wa al-lail" (by the night) and "wa al-fajr" (by the dawn), highlighting the significance of time.

Management involves planning, organizing, and controlling, and this also applies to time, which is likened to the most precious deposit granted by Allah SWT. In general, every person, whether rich or poor, a criminal or a devout worshiper, has the same amount of time—one day and one night, or 24 hours. However, it depends on each individual how they use that time. Those who fail to manage their time will undoubtedly feel a lack of time, and thus, the outcomes will differ. An Arabic proverb says, "Time is more precious and important than gold," and another one states, "Time is a sword, and if you do not use it, it will cut you."

Islam teaches that time is a gift from Allah SWT and must be used wisely and well. The Qur'an contains many verses about time, one of which is found in Surah Al-Ashr, emphasizing the use of time for worship and leading a balanced life between this world and the hereafter.

Time Management

Management comes from the word "to manage," which means to organize. The organization is carried out through a process and is arranged according to the sequence of management functions. Therefore, management is a process to achieve the desired goals. Time management is a process of planning, organizing, mobilizing, and controlling the productivity of time. Time becomes one of the resources for work. This resource must be managed effectively and efficiently. Effectiveness is reflected in the achievement of the time management goals that were set previously. Meanwhile, efficiency contains two meanings: reducing the specified time and investing time by using the available time.[1]

According to Griffin, management is a set of activities such as planning, decision-making, organizing, directing, and controlling, aimed at the organizational resources (human, financial, physical equipment, and information) to achieve organizational goals in an efficient and effective manner. This view also touches on the objects,

[1] Suci Istriana et al., *The Perspective of the Qur'an on Time Management of Quran Memorizers*, *Postgraduate Scientific Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, August 2023. p. 98.

which are the resources that must be worked on by the subjects, in order to achieve the organization's objectives. It is further detailed by the condition that these activities must be carried out efficiently and effectively.

Meanwhile, time is a resource that cannot be bought, sold, shared with others, or taken from them. Time cannot be added or reduced each day; everyone has 24 hours in a day and night. What distinguishes people is how they use that time. Successful people who maximize their time may use different techniques and systems, but they share one thing in common: they have a vision of how they want to spend their time, a vision that includes an awareness of priorities. They know what they will do with their time. In terminology, time management is defined as the skill of organizing time to successfully achieve positive life goals or ambitions.[2]

The definition of time in the Indonesian Dictionary is the entire series of moments when a process, action, or state is occurring or taking place. Soeharso, as quoted by Sofyani, states that human time in daily life can be categorized into three types: working time, self-care time, and leisure time. Time management is both a science and an art of managing time usage effectively and efficiently to achieve a specific goal through the elements within it. Lakein states that time management is the planning, organizing, mobilizing, and controlling of time

[2] Fitrotun Najizah, *Time Management in Learning in Islam from the Perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith*, *Journal of Islamic Education Science*, Vol. 05, No. 02, September 5, 2021, p. 107-108.

productivity. Time is a resource that must be managed effectively and efficiently to support activities.[3]

Time management is the ability of an individual to control time by scheduling and prioritizing tasks to achieve goals effectively and efficiently. Time management involves the actions and processes of planning and executing conscious control over the time used for activities, especially in enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity.

The concept of time management in the Qur'an relates to management as a process or framework that involves guidance or direction for a group toward organizational goals or tangible purposes. Time management, in this context, refers to the way of organizing and utilizing time. Management essentially means organizing, planning, and utilizing time in the best possible way in an activity that benefits both oneself and others. If we refer to the term management, it usually includes planning, implementation, control, and evaluation. Initially, management was not widely known by certain groups, but in practice, it is now commonly applied. Management is known as a concept designed to utilize resources in a workplace or corporation. Therefore, there is still a need for renewal by integrating human, Islamic, cultural, and other values. This is essential to ensure that the concept of management is not solely focused on productivity and effectiveness but also emphasizes the right and correct process and objectives.

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[3] Hafisa Idayu, *Guidance and Counseling in Learning: Time Management for Qur'an Memorization in Achieving Academic Success*, *Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, Vol. 4, No. 1, January-June 2020, p.7.

In Islam, management is the manifestation of righteous deeds that begin with good intentions. These good intentions will later generate motivation to achieve good results for the welfare of all. From an Islamic perspective, time is highly valuable. In Surah Al-Ashr, Allah swears by time, indicating its significance. According to studies in the sciences of the Qur'an, Allah often uses oaths with things that have high value and worth. Time is a part of the life of all creatures from the past to the present, and it is the greatest blessing Allah has granted to humans. It is an inevitable truth for humans to utilize time as effectively and efficiently as possible to fulfill their duties as servants and stewards (caliphs) on earth.[4]

The aspects of time management according to Atkinson are as follows:

1. **Setting Goals**

   Setting goals helps an individual focus attention on a task that will be carried out, concentrating on the goal and objective to be achieved, and planning within the time limits that have been provided.

2. **Prioritizing**

   Prioritizing is necessary because available time is limited and not all tasks hold the same level of importance. The order of priorities is made based on ranking, from the lowest to the highest priority. The priority order is determined by considering what is

[4] Firdaus, *The Concept of Time Management in Surah Al-'Asr (A Semiotic Study of the Qur'an)*, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January-June 2022. p. 4-5

most important, urgent, or vital that must be done first. In Al-Maqaashid asy-Syar'iyyah (the core objectives of Islamic law), scholars divide them into three categories:

a. **Primary or Essential Needs (adh-Dharuuriyyaat)** – Needs that must be met for the realization of goodness and welfare in both this world and the Hereafter. If these needs are not met, the goodness of the world will not be guaranteed. Examples include the fundamental objectives of Islamic law (al-kulliyyaat al-khams), which are the protection of religion, life, intellect, offspring, and property.
b. **Secondary Needs (al-Haajiyyaat)** – Things needed by humans to create ease and alleviate life's difficulties. An example is the allowance (rukhsah) in worship when a person encounters conditions that make worship difficult.
c. **Tertiary Needs (at-Taahsiinaat)** – Things needed for refinement, such as noble character and good habits. An example is the requirement of physical cleanliness, clothing, and place when performing worship.

3. **Creating a Schedule**

Creating a schedule or arranging a timetable. A schedule is a list of activities to be carried out by an individual, along with the time order during a specific period. The purpose of creating a schedule is to avoid conflicts between activities, prevent forgetting, and reduce the rush in completing tasks.

4. **Being Assertive**

Assertiveness can be defined as a firm attitude in saying "no" or rejecting a request or task from others in a positive way without feeling guilty or becoming aggressive.

5. **Being Firm**

Being firm is a strategy applied to avoid violating rights and ensure that others do not reduce the effectiveness of time usage.

6. **Avoiding Procrastination**

Procrastination is the delay of a task until it is done late. Delaying tasks can result in failure to complete the work on time, disrupting the carefully planned schedule, and hindering the achievement of established goals.

7. **Minimizing Time Wastage**

Minimizing wasted time involves cutting down on activities that consume time but provide little benefit. Such activities often become obstacles for an individual to achieve success, as they lead to procrastination of more important tasks.

8. **Time Control**

Time control is related to the feeling of being able to manage time and the control over factors that can influence the use of time.[5]

Time Management in the Qur'an

In human life, time is extremely important, to the extent that Allah SWT reminds His servants about it in the Qur'an. In *Tafsir Al-Qurthubi*

[5] Hafisa Idayu, *Guidance and Counseling in Learning: Time Management for Qur'an Memorization in Achieving Academic Success*, p. 8-9

Al-Jami' li Ahkamil Qur'an, it is mentioned in the narration of Ibn Ka'ab that he asked the Messenger of Allah (SAW) about the meaning of Surah Al-Asr, and the Prophet (SAW) replied:

وَالْعَصْرِ ۙ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَفِيْ خُسْرٍ ۙ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ ۙ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ۤ

It means: By time, indeed, mankind is in loss, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds and encourage each other to the truth and encourage each other to patience.

Wa al-'Ashr, Allah swears by the afternoon time.

Inna al-Insāna lafī khusrin, the person referred to as being in loss is Abu Jahl.

Illa al-ladzīna āmanū, the one referred to as a believer is Abu Bakr (RA).

Wa 'amilu ash-shālihāti, those who perform righteous deeds are Umar bin Khattab (RA).

Wa tawā shau bi al-haq, those who enjoin truth are Uthman bin Affan (RA).

Wa tawā shaw bi al-shabr, those who enjoin patience are Ali bin Abi Talib (RA).

In the interpretation of Al-Qurtubi, as narrated by Ibn Ka'ab (RA) from the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the meaning of those who are in loss is represented by Abu Jahl, one of the leading figures of the Quraysh disbelievers who most strongly opposed the Prophet's mission. Meanwhile, the meaning of faith is represented by Abu Bakr (RA), as he was the first adult male to openly declare his belief.

As for those who perform righteous deeds, this is embodied in Umar bin Khattab (RA), who was known for his firmness in upholding ***amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*** (enjoining good and forbidding evil). The

meaning of enjoining one another to truth (***al-haq***) is represented by Uthman bin Affan (RA), who played a significant role in compiling the official codex of the Qur'an, known as the ***Mushaf Uthmani***. Finally, the representation of enjoining one another to patience is embodied in Ali bin Abi Talib (RA), as he was one of the companions who faced the most trials and tribulations. His leadership was marked by numerous challenges and conflicts, including the Battle of Siffin and the tragic events of Karbala after his passing.[6]

Sheikh Muhammad Abduh explains in his **Tafsir Juz' Amma** that among the Arabs, it was common for people to gather in the evening and discuss matters of life and daily affairs. Because many of these conversations were unrestrained, they often led to arguments, resentment, and hostility. Some even cursed the **Asr** (afternoon) time, calling it an unfortunate or ill-fated period, as many conflicts seemed to arise during that time.

Thus, this verse was revealed as a warning: **"By time (Asr)"**—pay attention to time itself. The problem does not lie in time, but in how people use it. Many waste their time boasting about wealth, praising themselves, and belittling others. This leads to conflicts, and when disputes arise, they blame the time of Asr, whereas in reality, they are at fault. Had they engaged in meaningful discussions without offending others, the time of Asr would have been beneficial for them.

"By time" (first verse)—this refers to all time, the moments we pass in our lives, era after era, phase after phase. The world revolves,

[6] Firdaus, *The Concept of Time Management in Surah Al-'Asr (A Semiotic Study of the Qur'an)*. p. 8-9

and time moves forward, bringing joy and sorrow, rise and fall, youth and old age. Life begins, then death follows, leaving only memories of the past. Allah takes time as an oath, reminding people of its significance. We live in this world only for a period, and once we depart, our time is gone forever. The past cannot be repeated, and time continues for those who remain, generation after generation.

"Indeed, mankind is in loss" (second verse)—throughout life, humans are constantly at a loss. Time passes, yet there is no real gain. From the moment of birth, each passing day means one less day of life. Time continues, from youth to old age, and all that is left is loss. Humans only realize their loss when they grow old, when their bodies no longer have the strength to act. They are left with regret, reminiscing about the past, lamenting the time wasted without meaningful deeds to prepare for the Hereafter.

"Except for those who believe" (third verse)—only those who have faith do not suffer loss. They have a firm belief that life is by the will of the Almighty. Human existence is temporary, but this temporary time can be used wisely through faith. Faith makes people aware of their origin and purpose—serving the Creator and benefiting others. Faith instills the conviction that after this life, there is an eternal life where all deeds will be judged by Allah.

"And do righteous deeds"—living righteously and engaging in beneficial work. Life is a reality, and so is death. The good things around us are also real. What is good is praised, and what is evil harms both oneself and others. Faith, once rooted in the soul, naturally leads to righteous actions. From the moment we are in the womb, we move.

When we are born, we move. Life itself is movement. After we leave this world, reality continues. The first reality is the memories left behind, and the second reality is returning to Allah.

If one performs righteous deeds in life, their memory endures even after death. Sometimes, their legacy outlasts their physical existence. As believers, we trust that the good deeds we leave behind are the true wealth we will present before Allah. This ensures that our time in life is not wasted.

"And advise one another to truth"—happiness in life comes from living as a community. A selfish, isolated life is a life of loss. Therefore, we should build bonds of kindness, reminding one another of what is right, so that truth is upheld together. We must also remind one another of mistakes, so that wrongdoings are collectively avoided. This way, life becomes fulfilling, and one never feels lost because each person realizes they are part of a greater whole.

"And advise one another to patience"—it is not enough to simply remind others of the truth. Life is not a smooth path; hardships and obstacles are inevitable. Challenges are numerous, and difficulties often match moments of ease. Many people fail because they lack patience; they give up too soon or hesitate to move forward, stopping midway in their journey. But to stop means to fall behind. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes that patience can only be achieved by those with inner strength (Surah Fussilat 41:35). If one lacks these four qualities, then their entire life is in loss.

Ibn Qayyim, in his book **Miftah Dar as-Sa'adah**, explains that when a person attains these four stages, they achieve true success:

1. Knowing the truth.
2. Acting upon the truth.
3. Teaching the truth to others.
4. Persevering in upholding, practicing, and teaching the truth.

This Surah clearly outlines these four ranks. Allah swears by time that every human being is in loss, except those who:

1. **Believe**—this is the first level, recognizing the truth and accepting it.
2. **Do righteous deeds**—this is the second level, practicing what is known to be true.
3. **Advise one another to truth**—this is the third level, guiding and teaching others.
4. **Advise one another to patience**—this is the fourth level, encouraging steadfastness and perseverance in upholding the truth.

This is the path to perfection. True perfection is not only achieving self-fulfillment but also helping others attain it. Perfection comes through the strength of knowledge and action. Knowledge is upheld by **faith**, while action is strengthened by **righteous deeds**. Completing others comes through **teaching** and **encouraging patience in both knowledge and action**.[7]

The characteristics of a believer include always advising one another in goodness and encouraging patience in obedience. They

[7] Prof. Dr. Sheikh Abdulmalik Bin Abdulkarim Amrullah (Hamka), *Tafsir Al-Azhar Juzu' XXX*, (Jl. Citarum 29 Surabaya: Kebayoran Baru, Rabi'ul Awwal 1398/April 1973), p. 232- 235

understand that the essence of religion is mutual counsel and reminders—religion exists to guide and remind people of the truth. In conclusion, a person will not be in loss if they:

1. **Recognize the truth**, which is faith.
2. **Practice the truth** by living according to their faith.
3. **Teach the truth** to those who do not yet understand it.
4. **Remain patient** in adapting to the truth, practicing it, and teaching it to others.

In **Tafsir Al-Azhar**, narrated by Dr. Hamka, the concept of **time management** is also discussed in **Surah An-Naba' (78:9-11)**.

وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا ۙ وَجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا ۙ وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا ۚ

> The meaning is: **"And We made your sleep for rest, and We made the night as a covering, and We made the day for livelihood."**

Verse 9: **"And We made your sleep for rest"** – Thus, your soul and body, which are constantly busy, can find peace again, gathering new strength. Sleep is a necessity that cannot be separated from life.

Verse 10: **"And We made the night as a covering"** – According to Ibn Jarir At-Tabari, the darkness of the night envelops your entire being, so even if you are without clothing, the darkness itself serves as a covering. According to the interpretation of Ibn Jubair and As-Sudayy, the tranquility gained from deep sleep helps restore energy for the next day, similar to replacing worn-out clothing with fresh, clean garments.

Verse 11: **"And We made the day for livelihood"** – After resting and recovering at night, the body and soul feel refreshed in the morning.

With renewed energy, one begins to work and actively move across the vast earth, seeking sustenance, earning a living, and finding food and drink. This is what is referred to as *ma'asha*—livelihood.[8]

In **Tafsir Ibn Kathir**, the explanation of **Surah An-Naba' (78:9-11)** is as follows:

وَّجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًاۙ وَّجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًاۙ وَّجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًاۚ

> The meaning is: **"And We made your sleep for rest, and We made the night as a covering, and We made the day for livelihood."**.

Verse 9: "And We made your sleep for rest," meaning that sleep is a time to stop the physical activity of the body, allowing it to rest after the efforts and struggles faced during the day.

Verse 10: "And We made the night as a covering," meaning that the darkness and blackness of the night provides comfort and tranquility, allowing people to relax and find peace.

Verse 11: "And We made the day for livelihood," meaning that the daylight is bright, clear, and shining, allowing humans to go about their daily tasks such as seeking a living, working, trading, and fulfilling other responsibilities.[9]

In Tafsir Al-Mishbah, M. Quraish Shihab explains Surah An-Naba' verses 9-11 as follows:

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[8] Prof. Dr. Sheikh Abdulmalik Bin Abdulkarim Amrullah (Hamka), *Tafsir Al-Azhar Juzu' XXX*, p. 9

[9] Dr. Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Abdurahman bin Ishaq Al-Sheikh, *Lubaabut Tafsir Min Ibnu Katsir*, Volume 8. (Mu-assasah Daar al-Hilaal Cairo: Pustaka Imam asy-Syafi'i), p. 380

وَّجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا ۙ وَّجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا ۙ وَّجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا ۚ

The meaning is: **"And We made your sleep for rest, and We made the night as a covering, and We made the day for livelihood."**.

The word "subatan" is understood by some to be derived from the root word "sabata," which means to stop, and what is stopped is activity, which ultimately comes to represent rest. Others interpret the word as meaning tranquility, specifically the calmness of certain faculties that were previously active during wakefulness. From this perspective, "subatan" is understood as sleep.

The *Tafsir al-Muntakhab* comments that: "Sleep is the cessation or reduction of neural activity in the brain. For this reason, during sleep, the body's energy and heat levels decrease. When sleeping, the body feels calm and relaxed after the muscles or nerves, or both, have been fatigued from work. All bodily activities decrease during sleep, except for metabolic processes, urine and kidney flow, and perspiration. If these processes stop, they would endanger the human body. Breathing also slightly decreases in intensity, but it becomes deeper and more prolonged, with air coming more from the chest than from the abdomen. The heart beats slower, reducing blood flow. The muscles that were tense relax, which makes it difficult for a person who is sleeping to resist any external forces. All these factors make sleep the most beneficial time for rest, as mentioned in the verse."

The word "ma'asyan" is derived from the root "asya," which means life. "Ma'asyan" is used to refer to life itself, as well as the means of life, such as food and drink. Both meanings are encapsulated by the

term. Daytime, which is associated with life, is contrasted with night, which is the time for sleep. Night is not equated with death, so it is natural for the day to be associated with life, the opposite of death.[10]

Conclusion

As humans, we are required to use our time as best as possible to engage in actions that are beneficial and useful for ourselves as well as others. Time management is an individual's ability to control time by scheduling and prioritizing in order to achieve goals effectively and efficiently. Time management is the act and process of planning and executing conscious control over the amount of time used for activities, especially in enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity. In human life, time is very important, to the extent that Allah SWT reminds His servants about it in the Qur'an. For example, in Surah Al-Asr, which explains the importance of using time as wisely as possible. If we live by wasting time, we belong to those who are at a loss. Furthermore, in Surah An-Naba' verses 10 and 11, it explains that the night is for rest, while the day is for seeking sustenance.

[10] M. Quraish Shihab *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2003), p. 9-10.

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