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**ISLAMIC CRITICAL THINKING: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE
BASED ON THE AL-QURAN AND SCHOLARLY VIEWS**Noraini Junoh^{a1}, Abdul Manam Mohamad^{b2}, Zanirah Mustafa@Busu^{c3} & Nor
Asmira Mat Jusoh^{d4}^{a, c, d}Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan Malaysia^bUniversiti Sultan Zainal Abidin Terengganu Malaysia¹norainijunoh@uitm.edu.my (corresponding author)²abdulmanan@unisza.edu.my³zanir126@uitm.edu.my⁴norasmira@uitm.edu.my**Abstract**

Critical thinking is an intellectual tool that could help a person form arguments, determine a source's credibility, analyse presumptions, or make decisions in various contexts. This study is intended to examine the Western and Islamic critical thinking concepts and their significance according to the al-Quran and the scholars' views. The library research method was used for collecting and analysing data from literature by cognitive philosophers, psychologists, and Islamic scientists. The conceptual framework was built using the content analysis method. The importance of Islamic critical thinking was elaborated to assist in Islamic critical thinking practices. The study found similarities and differences between Islamic and Western critical thinking. The similarities are from the rational utilization and the differences are from the value of truth. Islamic critical thinking accepts divine deliverance (*wahyu*) as the main source of reference, hence, the thinking product eventually becomes the absolute truth. The major significance of Islamic critical thinking is to enhance the faith (*iman*) and piety (*takwa*) towards Allah SWT by contemplation and examination. Critical thinking helps a person to face challenges and solve problems in life and is demanded in Islam so that the mind is not neglected and used properly without transgressing His divine deliverance (*wahyu*).

Keywords: Islamic Critical Thinking, Significance, Faith and Piety, Challenges of Globalization.

INTRODUCTION

The field of critical thinking is nothing new in the world of knowledge and intellect. It has developed in line with human thinking from time immemorial. Now, it has earned its place in the educational curriculum, both in the Islamic and Western worlds. It is a pedagogical strategy and type of thinking that supports the approach to learning in all fields of the curriculum (Maria Salih, 2013). Hence, the subject of critical thinking was introduced to all levels of education, starting from primary school to the university level and has received encouraging reviews from all relevant parties (Hui, 2009).

This study had adduced two main objectives. First, to understand the concept and understanding of critical thinking from various Islamic and Western perspectives, especially the views of philosophers, psychologists and scientists, who are involved in the field of cognitive studies. Second, to examine the importance of critical thinking based on the al-Quran and the views of scholars.

METHODOLOGY

This study had applied the library research method in efforts to examine the importance of critical Islamic thinking based on the al-Quran and scholarly views. Basically, this study had adopted the qualitative approach via the content analysis framework. Data collection had employed the document analysis method by reviewing printed materials such as books, journal articles and thesis related to critical thinking. Next, the content analysis method was used to analyse data by examining several important sections, such as Western and Islamic critical thinking concepts as well as the importance of critical thinking in the al-Quran and according to the views of scholars involved in the field of thinking and philosophy.

DEFINITION OF CRITICAL THINKING

The field of critical thinking is a discipline of knowledge that was practically formulated and implemented by the Greeks, especially Socrates (m.400BC), Plato (m.347BC) and Aristotle (m.322BC) or also known as *The Greek Gang of Three*. However, theoretical and comprehensive arguments only started developing from the 19th century onwards. It has been much talked about by numerous parties, either among Western academicians or Islamic scholars. In Malaysia, the field of critical thinking has been accepted as part of an integrated discipline of knowledge, especially in the learning and teaching system, either at the primary, secondary or higher education levels. Numerous researchers in the field of psychology, cognition, law, mathematics, Aqedah, Syariah etc. have conceptualised, analysed and applied the field of critical thinking in a sustainable manner according to the suitability of the explored

field. Hence, this study discussed the definitions of critical thinking from the language and terminology aspects.

From a Language Perspective

The definition of 'critical thinking', from the language aspect, is based on three languages, namely Malay, English and Arabic. According to Malay, the combination of the terms 'thinking' and 'critical' found in the *Kamus Dewan* (1994) refers the ability of a person's mind to examine the information received and determine whether to accept or reject the information. Whereas in English, it consists of the words 'critical' and 'thinking', which refers to the act of thinking by the human mind or whatever that occurs in the mind, especially involving admonitions or something that constraints or being judgmental about something (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1990; *New Oxford*, 2007). The term 'critical thinking' in Arabic refers to '*al-tafkir al-naqdi*' or '*al-fikr al-naqdi*', which means thinking that emphasises on efforts to examine, debate and criticise everything that is accepted (al-Ba'albaki & Ruhi, 2002).

Based on the comparisons of these three definitions in three languages, it was found that the meaning of 'critical thinking' did not have any apparent difference. Basically, it means efforts to criticise, research or study and evaluate what's in the mind of a person pertaining to some information. The definition adduced by the three languages had mutually complimented each other.

From a Terminology Perspective

The definition from the terminology perspective was explored according to two dimensions, namely based on the views of Western and Islamic scholars. Both these dimensions were adduced to explore the relationship between Western and Islamic critical thinking and determine if there are similarities or differences. This relationship provides a comprehensive picture of the Islamic critical thinking framework and its importance.

Views of Western Scholars

The definition of critical thinking is wide and deep based on experience and studies carried out by each scientific scholar. Basically, there are three major principles in critical thinking adduced by *The Greek Gang of Three*, which are consistent attitudes (defending the truth), arguing with concrete proof and possess concordant ideas (each idea is related to one another) (Ahmad Sunawari, 2006). These principles have been developed and reviewed systematically in the 19th century with the emergence of new discoveries related to the brain, mind and human thinking.

Scholars, philosophers and psychologists in the cognitive field have defined critical thinking from various aspects of their own thinking. Dewey (1933) had referred to

critical thinking as thinking actively, continuously and rationally as well as making deliberations from it. Bloom (1956) had referred to it by involving mental activities such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Woods and Walton (1974) believed that critical thinking does not mean insults, demoralising, being negative or having non-productive skills but rather, developing skills related to constructive criticism of a certain thinking process. Whereas Meyers (1986) viewed critical thinking as an intellectual process that is disciplined, active and skilful in forming concepts, applications, analysis, synthesis as well as evaluating information based on observations, experience, reflection, arguments or communications as a basis for thinking and responding.

Next, Phillips (1997) had defined it as, "...someone able to evaluate ideas, suggestions, responses and solutions as well as make evaluations as to whether the accepted reason is appropriate or otherwise." (p. 84). The definition given by Moore and Parker (2012) referred critical thinking to "thinking cautiously and specifically", which would determine whether one accepts, rejects or defers the evaluation made. In other words, making wise decisions and correcting conclusions without being influenced by emotions, haste, consideration of irrelevant things, fool-hardiness and biasness or its equivalent.

The various definitions above show that critical thinking is very unique and special because it is a method of thinking that is practiced by all folds of humankind. The difference lies in the level of using the mind and thinking in a person. This is because every individual's thinking process differs due to differences in the mental capability, experience and knowledge. Hence, there are three main components that form the definition of critical thinking based on studies by the scholars above. First, thinking produced by oneself without being influenced by others' thinking uses the left brain based on order and the laws of logic when considering something or making decisions cautiously (Mohd Azhar, 2001). Second, thinking that is formed from assertions and support from convincing arguments. Third, thinking that combines various statements, ideas and information and then forms a new idea that is true and relevant (Hui, 2009). Hence, critical thinking could be deemed as a skill or method of thinking produced from assumptions and arguments that are true and substantiated in order to achieve the truth. This would help someone avoid making the wrong decision and solve problems effectively.

Overall, critical thinking from a Western perspective is a thorough mental process used for examining something that is accepted based on assumptions and convincing arguments eventually yielding the truth or new ideas. It does not refer to activities that just criticise, but rather, offer arguments that could be accepted rationally based on established laws of logical thinking.

The Views of Islamic Scholars

The various definitions of critical thinking adduced by Islamic scholars begins from the meaning of the human mind or intellect based on debates in the al-Quran and al-Sunnah. It is also related to the theory of knowledge and epistemology in Islam. The critical thinking concept among early Islamic scholars is evident in their debates about logic. This has been examined and analysed systematically, especially by al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali. The term 'critical thinking' was not found in any of the literature by these scholars but debates, especially on the mind and its relations with logic, were extensively explained by them.

Critical thinking, as adduced by al-Farabi (1906), is evident in his elaboration on the division of intellect in human theory (*nazari*) manusia. He divided intellect into three levels, namely material intellect (*al-aql bi al-quwwah*), actual intellect (*al-'aql bi al-fi'l*) and acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafad*). The first level is the beginning level in the development of human thinking, and it continues to expand until the second level, when it uses the intellect continuously. At the second level, humankind is involved in critical thinking, which contains an information filtering process that is thorough and focuses on various aspects that are discussed. Hence, the intellect at this level has not achieved complete truth because it reacts solely according to logical thinking. Therefore, the intellect at the third level, which is only owned by certain groups of people, can achieve true knowledge. This is because these groups need to endeavour to make these ideas work by thinking, which then explores in-depth, analyses, interprets, explains and elaborates all knowledge and information obtained by them.

Al-Farabi's explanation about the levels of the intellect has made him the pioneer in the critical thinking method, which is a mixture of ideas from Greek philosophers. According to Osman Bakar (1991), the fundamentals and methodologies of al-Farabi's philosophical thinking was based on the al-Quran and the al-Sunnah. Thus, when the intellect is used exhaustively and in accordance with divine deliverance (*wahyu*), then the human mind would be able to achieve the truth, as mentioned in the al-Quran, through observations, studies and understanding all the issues pertaining to this world.

Ibn Sina (1938) had also discussed the levels of the mind as al-Farabi did; however, he added one more level between al-Farabi's first and second levels, by calling it the common intellect (*al-'aql al-malakah*). At this level, the human mind has begun to be trained to think about matters that are abstract. Hence, information that is received is examined and understood effectively in order to obtain a certain truth when achieving the next intellect level, as adduced by al-Farabi.

Imam al-Ghazali (2011) also gave meaning to the word ‘mind’ by dividing it into four categories. First, the mind as a natural instinct (*gharizah*) that differentiates humans from creatures and has the potential to accept knowledge in the form of thinking and being speculative as well as assume abstract matters. Second, *daruri* forms of knowledge that come to children who can think. Third, knowledge that is obtained through experience. Fourth, a form of strength that is built within a person and enables the person to know the cause and effect in order to control worldly instincts followed by the drive to achieve happiness in this world and the afterlife. Although al-Ghazali had divided the definition of the ‘mind’ into four categories, it is similar to the level of the mind adduced by the philosophers above. The approach was more religious and connects with the elements of the soul and spirituality (Nasution, 1999). Concerning this matter, al-Ghazali (n.d.) made the analogy that the mind was the Prime Minister (*wazir*) who helps the King (*hati*) to facilitate the management and administration of a city. This means that the mind plays an important role in controlling the behaviour and thinking of humans so that they are not involved in matters that degrade their dignity. According to him, in order to reach the level or the fourth definition of the mind, the second and third definitions of the mind are involved in various logical and rational activities, such as observation (*al-nazar*), fair observation (*al-tadabbur*), reflection (*al-ta’ammul*), observing with with eyes and the heart (*al-istibshar*), interpretation (*al-i’tibar*), to ponder about it (*al-tafkir*) and remember (*al-tadhakkur*) (Abdul Mujib & Jusuf Mudzakir, 2001). These terms are the elements of critical thinking found in the al-Quran (Anita et.al., 2016; Zainorah, 2015). Indirectly, the definition of the mind by al-Ghazali, especially levels two and three, are related to the concept of critical thinking, as adduced by the philosophers above.

Whereas, the critical thinking concept adduced by later Islamic scholars, such as Syed Syeikh Ahmad al-Hadi, Harun Nasution, ‘Iwad al-Qarni, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and Harun Yahya, had systematised the critical thinking field and discussed it in the al-Quran context.

Ahmad al-Hadi (1965) emphasised the use of the mind based on the call of the al-Quran to think about nature and all things related to it. He also rejected thoughts inherited from ancestors and attitudes pertaining to ancestral law (*taklid*). Whereas Harun Nasution (1979) had elaborated extensively about intellect, thinking and its functions. He stated that the use of intellect to develop knowledge was urged by the al-Quran. Hence, he introduced the terms *tadabbur*, *tafqiḥ*, *nazar*, *tafakkur*, *ta’aqil*, *ulu al-albab* and *ulu al-ilm*, which all referred to the meaning of thinking. Indirectly, he introduced the basic concept of critical thinking based on the terms found in the al-Quran.

Theoretically, the term *al-tafkir al-naqdi* is found in the debate by ‘Iwad al-Qarni (1418H). He defined it as thinking that is separated into the good and bad elements in a practice and not necessarily adduced new views regarding an issue. Al-Qaradawi (1996) used the term ‘academic intellect’ (*al-‘aqliyyah al-‘ilmiyyah*), referring to critical thinking where the thinking objectively studies all information without any bias to any party. Whereas Harun Yahya (2000) had used the term *deep thinking*, which referred to critical thinking. He urged Muslims to think seriously and thoroughly, especially by studying and practicing verses of the al-Quran. Harun Yahya also urged Muslims to think more about humankind, nature, life, afterlife, fires of Hell etc. The activity of thinking is carried out continuously in order to obtain goodness, both in this world and the afterlife.

Based on the views of Islamic scholars above, the meaning of critical thinking according to the views of early Muslim scholars and those after them were not very different because both had made the al-Quran the basis and foundation for critical thinking. It focused on the potential of the intellect to evaluate, analyse and respond to situations and surroundings. Islamic scholars were confident that the intellect could achieve the truth when synchronised with divine deliverance (*wahyu*). What is important is that the critical and extensive use of the intellect could drive humankind to achieve true life and portray the identity of Muslims pivoted on the teachings according to the divine deliverance (*wahyu*) by Allah SWT. It also strengthens the faith and confidence in thinking about nature and all its contents.

Overall, critical thinking according to the views of Western and Islamic scholars are basically similar from the aspect of using the intellect rationally to seek the truth. From a more in-depth perspective, Islamic critical thinking is more extensive because it relates the values of truth with the source of divine deliverance (*wahyu*). Western critical thinking does not relate physics with metaphysics as done by Islamic critical thinking.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ISLAMIC CRITICAL THINKING

Based on the various definitions adduced by scholars above, it shows that the field of critical thinking is vital for Muslims. Specifically, the importance of Islamic critical thinking is viewed from two aspects, namely afterlife (*ukhrawi*) and worldly (*duniawi*) aspects. From the afterlife aspect, it strengthens the relationship between humankind and Allah SWT, his creator. From the worldly aspect, it is humankind’s preparation in facing ever-challenging contemporary trials and tribulations. In other words, critical thinking is required to understand the spiritual, physical and mental demands and to act according to the demands of religion as follows:

Strengthening the Faith and Confidence in Allah SWT

In the al-Quran, the term *fikr* is repeatedly mentioned, either from the pronunciation or meaning aspects, which refers to the ‘past’ or ‘present’, in 18 places. Whereas, the call to observe by way of thinking or pondering (*tafakkur*, *tadabbur*, *tafahhum*, *tafqih*, *tadhakkur*) is mentioned more than 34 times. The phrase *uli al-albab* in the al-Quran is found in 16 places. The word *al-‘aql*, with all its functions, characteristics, a method for understanding something and turning it into a piece of evidence, is mentioned in almost 300 verses (Muhammad al-Ghazali, 1996; al-Qaradawi, 1996).

According to al-Banna (2006), the al-Quran explicitly mentions about the message to ‘think’ (*tafkir*), as found in surah al-A‘raf 7:184 and al-Rum 30:8. Implicitly, the call or command to ‘think’, specifically about the signs that point to the power of God as mentioned in surah Ali ‘Imran 3:191, Yunus 10:24, al-Baqarah 2:219 and al-Nahl 16:44. The al-Quran frequently uses terms such as *tafqih*, *tadabbur*, *tadhakkur* and *tadabbur* to refer to in-depth, objective and focused thinking. These expressions are frequently repeated in the al-Quran and it shows the firm emphasis of the al-Quran on the awareness to think and encourages to seek the truth by thinking. The command to ‘think’, ‘study’ and ‘digest’ the contents of the al-Quran is the door to having faith in Allah SWT (al-Banna, 2006). This is apparent and is clearly shown in the journey taken by Prophet Ibrahim AS when looking for His God, whereby He places suspicion on the objects prayed by His people, such as the sun, moon and animals that were not permanent in nature. He then made the One who created things like the sky as His God (al-An‘am 6:75-78).

Based on the explanation above, it shows the importance for Muslims to think critically, especially when strengthening morality and trust in Allah SWT. The process of ‘thinking and understanding’ the prowess of God through the signs of nature and His creatures would advocate and substantiate the seeds of faith that grow within a person. Next, it shows that all of nature and life is not wasted or created without any purpose. According to Mahmud (1998), the verses of the al-Quran pertaining to thinking, sight and observation refer to ‘take notice’. Humans must think by assuming that Allah SWT is the *al-Haq* or the Truth and Goodness, in order to avoid the intellect and thinking from getting entrapped in deviations and ignorance.

The fact is humans were created to devote themselves to Allah SWT through thinking (*fikr*) and devotional acts (*dhikr*) as well as making efforts to understand this fact, which then makes them obedient and successful subjects (*al-falah*). Sidek Baba (2006) emphasised that without thinking (*fikr*) and devotional acts (*dhikr*) humans lose their direction to understand the meaning of oneself and life as well as eventually break off relations with the Creator. Thinking (*fikr*) and devotional acts (*dhikr*) provide a connection between what humans should know and what Allah SWT has

proclaimed. According to Sidek Baba (2006), thinking (*fikr*) is not actually cognitive training in order to obtain data, facts and information. Thinking (*fikr*) and devotional acts (*dhikr*) encourage humans to seek true data, facts and information, which is the light that leads humans to understand and approach the meaning of creation. Numerous unseen or concealed (*ghaybiyyat*) factors are incomprehensible to human thinking; however, by carrying out devotional acts (*dhikr*), a lot of wisdom is bestowed by Allah SWT on those who sincerely seek, reflect and realise the truth about being His subjects. Mohd Radhi (2020), pointed out the integration between revealed knowledge (*naqli*) and worldly knowledge (*aqli*) or thinking (*fikr*) and devotional acts (*dhikr*) elements will formed an obedient and pious Muslim, in order to live better life in worldly life and here after.

Hence, the al-Quran's prompting to think critically has a wide and comprehensive meaning compared to the views of modern thinkers. In the West, philosophers and thinkers are struggling to find the meaning of the 'self' but are still unsure and confused, which has led to various ideologies that only lay importance on worldly affairs, riches, power as well as ranks or positions (al-Buti, 2004). All these ideologies centre on the secular understanding that separates lifestyle from religion, which eventually leads to disbelief and disarray or fallacy (Mohd Farid, 2015). Among the deviant Western theories is the theory of evolution by Darwin, from which evolved pragmatism, liberalism, marxism-sosialism, Freudian and women's emancipation movement (Sulaiman, 1979; Abdul Rahman, 1995).

In Islam, thinking about the prowess of Allah SWT through the window of knowledge is not thinking based solely on fantasy. The al-Quran contains the signs of greatness of Allah SWT so that humankind can perform *tadabbur* or to ponder systematically because this would offer wisdom for those who think (Sidek Baba, 2006; Osman Bakar, 1992). Critical thinking according to the al-Quran has its own system and role in connecting humankind with Allah SWT, humankind with humankind as well as humankind with other creatures.

Islamic critical thinking joints together faith, syariat, religious practices (*ibadat*) and morality. All these elements jointly strengthen to form a faithful and pious Muslim. Being faithful to Allah SWT frees oneself from the shackles of materialism and instinctual greed (*hawa nafsu*). One who is faithful would endeavour to develop religion, oneself, race and the whole of humankind (Alias, 2017; Tabarah, 1992). Critical thinking is not only mind's activity, but it has close relationship with belief (*iman*) in soul. By Integration of mind and heart, knowledge and action or practice will contribute to the pious vicegerent of Allah in the worldly life (Amir & Mohd Shukri, 2019).

In efforts to enculturise critical thinking, the al-Quran rejects traditional practices because it is *taklid*, it avoids the tedious process of thinking and the responsibility or respect shown towards ancestors (al-Banna, 2006; Bakkar, 1993; Mohd Sulaiman, 1980). In relation to this, Allah SWT emphasised on humankind’s obligations to practice *tauhid* (monotheism) towards Allah SWT and the belief that only Allah SWT had created the syariat suitable for human life. Practices contrary to the syariat, although it is part of traditional practices, cannot be practiced under any circumstances. This is because all the laws of Allah SWT are compulsory on humankind and is centrally based on the principle of ‘the good of the *ummah* in this world and in the afterlife’ and not the traditional practices inherited over the centuries (al-Buti, 1989). Hence, thinking critically would enable one to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate practices as well as whether it conforms with the commands and prohibitions of Allah SWT.

Based on the explanation by the al-Quran, Muslims should understand that efforts to study, understand, observe and analyse in an in-depth fashion is strongly encouraged in Islam so that humans do not err, which could lead to harmful consequences in this world and the afterlife. Eventually, this would lead the Mukmin to be truly faithful and pious towards Allah SWT.

Facing the Challenges of Globalization and Problem-Solving

Critical thinking is important when preparing Muslims to face the ever-challenging wave of globalization. According to Fathi Yakan (2002), the 21st century portrays rapid development in global trends and human thinking in line with developments in globalization. It is a big challenge for Muslims to follow mainstream globalization trends and at the same time endeavour to become a Mukmin who is faithful and pious. Pertaining to this matter, Fathi Yakan had listed 13 internal challenges and 5 external challenges that are faced by Muslims. Among them is lack of knowledge as well as being ignorant, no effective action to overcome all sorts of problems and Muslims who obtain inaccurate information that has caused misunderstanding in practices and thinking.

This requires Muslims to re-evaluate the actual way of thinking that should be in line with the religion as well as not based on instinct or Satan’s devilry. This is the method advocated by the al-Quran when driving human thinking and practices, as mentioned by Sayyid Qutb (1972, 3:1399):

Al-Quran turns religion into a *manhaj* that should be a source of reflection. It differs with the *manhaj* created by humans. This is because Islam was delivered to save humankind from hardship, errors

and deviations in the *manhaj*, which was built based on Satan's instinctual greed and deception.

In fact, the globalisation era has eroded moral and human values as well as marginalised religious values in the lives and culture of Muslims (Asmawati, 2005; Mohd. Nakhaie, 2001). This is mainly caused by the influence of Western thinking ideology based on rationalisation and secularism in the thinking of contemporary Muslims (Hashim, 2001; Khalif, 2012). Muslims are influenced by Western-style thinking and the Western lifestyle had become the best example in every aspect of life (al-Buti, 2004). Contemporary Muslims presume that using all forms of Western products, as in the *Americanization* or *Macdonaldisation* concept, portrays a successful life (Abdul Rahman, 2002). The glorification of Western artists and entertainment products is a requirement of modern life. Artists are examples that are well followed although they clearly behave and act contrary to Islamic teachings (Salasiah Abd. Wahab, 2001). A fanatical attitude towards artists would hinder one's mind and dampen the cultural spirit of critical thinking (Shaharom, 2001). (Daesh) or better known as ISIS is a new terrorist movement has sparked a new phenomenon in today's world. It is a threat for today's generation especially in Malaysia. They used social media to spread their ideology which is conflicted with the normal life. Social media such as YouTube, Facebook and twitter are the main platforms for disseminating the group's propaganda and information. Hence, social media is one of the factors contributed to the disseminating their deviant propaganda among community including Malaysia (Syafawani & Wan Fariza Alyati, 2020).

Hence, Westerners, especially the Jews-Zionist have transformed the mass media and electronic media into a platform for delivering their ideology and spreading ideologies contrary to Islam. Thus, by using these facilities, they spread negative propaganda about Allah SAW, lie about the *salihin*, revenge the Mukmin, hate, hide and falsify facts and the truth, mix the truth with falsehood, spread false information and rumours and make wild accusations (al-Khalidi, 2009). Muslims are not aware of this because of their oversight and preoccupation with chasing worldly pleasures and riches offered by the West through a Western lifestyle.

Undeniably, the contemporary mass and electronic media are a necessity when following the wave of globalization. Those who do not follow this wave are said to be left behind. *Facebook, instagram, twitter* and other forms of mass media provide various information, which could either be true or otherwise. Thus, do Muslims obtain great benefits from these facilities? According to Mohd Fauzi (2002), it is not wrong for Muslims to accept positive ideas from the West because Islam is a religion that is flexible, what more in matters related to the management of everyday life. Hence,

what is wrong is the acceptance of ideas by Western thinkers that have yet to be proven academically based on thinking consistent with Islamic epistemology.

Therefore, if Muslims are not critical and accept all that is propagated, then they have mistakenly chosen and not consistent with the style of thinking advocated by the al-Quran. Whereas in surah al-Nisa' 4:83, Allah SWT had stressed that all the information and ideas should be examined before accepting it in order to nurture the truth and harmony among society (Nasruddin Yunus, 2015). This, if Muslims accept the information without proving its validity, they would be involved in prolonged slander. This would destroy the solidarity and unity among the Muslims. This is the main agenda planned by the enemies of Islam, especially the Zionis-Jews, to destroy the religion of Islam (JAKIM, 1999).

Hence, critical thinking is one way to identify and understand an agenda that is contrary to Islam when a person can identify mistakes, confusion and assumptions that are wrong. This helps one to avoid repeating the mistakes as well as correcting and improving those mistakes in order to achieve the best decision (Jamal @ Nordin et al., 2011). In other words, Muslims would be able to identify and differentiate the actual teachings of Islam with teachings that are false, ignorant and devious, such as that dished out by the enemies of Islam. Furthermore, al-Buti (2004) stated that strengthening the way of thinking by promoting studies and observations of nature would revive the glory of Islamic civilization that once existed.

In relation to that, humankind must think critically every time, during everyday activities, during work and during learning (Bassham, 2005). It cannot be denied that humans cannot escape from mistakes and errors; thus, critical thinking is an effort to evaluate the mistakes and errors as well as to correct those mistakes. This is the tool used to help humans to achieve the most appropriate conclusion and solve various problems, whether big or small.

Thus, by thinking critically, one will become more matured, have an objective attitude when forming attitudes or decisions, always be sensitive (aware) and concerned, kind-hearted, confident and courageous, careful and responsible, have a high level of self-restraint and not be easily influenced (Nasruddin, Abdul Salam & Mohamad Mohsin, 2012). Hence, by possessing these characteristics, Muslims would be able to face any kind of internal or external test or challenge. Issues such as moral decay, rejection of religious values, influence of Western ideologies etc. can be overcome prudently (Mohd Fauzi, 2002). Critical thinking is a method or tool that helps humankind to evaluate the good and bad though only Allah SWT can provide guidance, the path and indicators as well as His mercy to humankind. This is the reason why the al-Quran urges its followers to think, observe, reflect and understand nature created by Him so

that Muslims do not neglect the values of divinity in thinking activities. This form of the intellect provides absolute benefits to humankind but not to other creatures.

CONCLUSION

Western scholars have conceptualised critical thinking as a mental process used when comprehensively examining something that is accepted based on convincing presumptions and arguments that eventually lead to the truth or produce new ideas. It does not refer to activities that solely criticise but lead to arguments that can be truly accepted rationally based on the established laws of logical thinking.

Compared to the Islamic critical thinking concept, which is not based solely on mental activities, critical thinking is an effort to analyse, study and examine, ponder, understand, summarize and evaluate this world thoroughly and comprehensively. This kind of mental activity connects humankind with Allah SWT, humankind with humankind and humankind with other creatures. The main aim of critical thinking is to strengthen the faith and confidence towards Allah SWT. When humankind holds dear to Him, then He would rectify the style of thinking and open the avenue for solving or overcoming every test and challenge faced by humankind.

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