W kierunku umiędzynarodowienia / Towards internationalization

Muslim auditors' ethics

MAŁGORZATA CZERNY *

Abstract

The article discusses Islamic ethics and the impact it has on the professional ethics of Muslim auditors. Based on studies of the available literature on the subject and the Qur'an, the paper identifies the source of Muslim ethics and indicates that its perspective is slightly different from the perspectives known in the West. It also identifies the ethical principles which should be followed by a Muslim auditor. The analysis of the sources indicates that Islamic ethics and the understanding of certain principles and rules in Muslim countries differ (for cultural and religious reasons) from the perspective commonly adopted in other countries, hence the belief that it is necessary to create their own code of ethics for professionals, such as auditors. Attempting to assess how cultural norms affect professional ethics, based on a selected example of professional audit practitioners in Muslim countries, the article may be a prelude to further research in this direction, not necessarily in relation to the Islamic cultural circle.

Keywords: Islam, accounting ethics, auditing, business ethics.

Streszczenie
Etyka muzułmańskiego audytora

Artykuł omawia etykę islamską i wpływ, jaki ma ona na etykę zawodową muzułmańskiego audytora. Wskazano w nim, na podstawie studiów dostępnej literatury przedmiotu i Koranu, źródła muzułmańskiej etyki, jej nieco odmienną, od znanych na Zachodzie teorii, perspektywę, a także zasady etyczne, którymi kierować się winien muzułmański audytor. Analiza źródeł wskazuje, że rozumienie pewnych zasad i reguł ze względów kulturowo-religijnych w krajach muzułmańskich różni się od perspektywy przyjętej w krajach przynależnych do innych kręgów kulturowych, dlatego jest przekonanie o konieczności stworzenia własnego kodeksu etycznego dla profesjonalistów, takich jak audytor. Podejmując próbę oceny, w jaki sposób normy kulturowe oddziaływują na etykę zawodową na wybranym przykładzie osób zajmujących się zawodowo audytem w krajach muzułmańskich, artykuł może stanowić wstęp do dalszych badań w tym kierunku, niekoniecznie w odniesieniu do islamskiego kręgu kulturowego.

Słowa kluczowe: islam, rachunkowość, audyt, etyka biznesu.

* Małgorzata Czerny, PhD, assistant professor, Poznań University of Economics and Business, Department of Management Accounting, ● https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5838-8322, malgorzata.czerny@ue.poznan.pl

Introduction

Although the basics of financial accounting and auditing have traditionally been based upon a rule-based framework (Cheney, 2002; Keim, Grant, 2003), the concept of a principle-based approach has been periodically recommended (Herron, Gilbertson, 2004; Satava et al., 2006). This was due to the scandals associated with unethical conduct in companies such as Enron or Arthur Andersen. Many scholars and researchers indicate that although accounting was once considered to be the highest in integrity among all professions, the regard that this profession once enjoyed has deteriorated in the wake of a succession of high profile scandals (Herron, Gilbertson, 2004). The public has become less trusting of the auditing profession's ability (and also willingness) to protect investor interests (Cullinan, 2004). When auditors are willing to compromise their independence or overlook key information to retain clients, the auditor's objectivity and the accuracy of the client's financial statements are immediately suspicious (McLean, Elkind, 2003).

Despite the greater emphasis on principle-based views on audit independence, the creation of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB), and the establishment of additional rules-based standards for audit companies, the decision to conduct audits ethically is likely to be taken internally in each company. Still, as rightly notice by Al-Aidaros et al. (2013), ethical issues are not always clear cut, even if they are reflected in codes; there are many grey areas that need to be dealt with carefully by organizations.

Rachels and Rachels (1993) define ethics as a set of moral principles, rules of conduct, or values. According to Burks (2006), the issue of ethics arises when a person has to decide between various alternatives that relate to moral principles. Hayes et al. (1999) express a similar opinion, defining ethics as a set of moral principles, rules of conduct, or values; they go on to say that ethics is important when a person has to make a decision based on various ethical choices.

Delaney (2005) claims that ethics is about the value to be sought in life and the principles that should govern human behavior and interaction. Ogbonna and Ebimobowei (2011) claim that ethics is reflected in the principles that individuals use to govern their activities, and in the personal standards by which a person distinguishes between right and wrong. Elegido (2000) describes ethics as the mission for, and the understanding of the good life, living well, and having a life worth living. Thus, ethics is largely a matter of perspective, by putting every action and goal in its place and knowing that it is important to do some things but not other. Nwagboso (2008) believes that ethical issues are what should and must be, not "what is", so ethics is a standard by which a person should evaluate an act or character. Even if ethics is commonly defined as "what is right and what is wrong", the most pressing issue is how one should know right from the wrong (Velasquez, 2006). It makes it then quite obvious that ethical principles, and how they are evaluated, may differ to varying degrees in different cultural circles.

Most well known ethical theories (relativism, utilitarianism, egoism, deontology, the divine command theory, virtue ethics) come from the Western cultural circle, so they are the result of Western understanding of what ethics is and how to apply it in decision-making.

There is no doubt that auditors who operate in a particular cultural environment are influenced by its values, and that defines their understanding of ethics and ethical behavior as well as what is expected of them. This article aims to identify the Islamic perspective of ethics and how it affects the ethical behavior (conduct) of Muslim financial audit practitioners[1] by defining what is expected of them. The paper also attempts to expand the perspective of assessing the impact of cultural norms on professional ethics and its norms as an introduction to further research. Reference literature and the Qur'an were used for the qualitative analysis. The literature selection was based on the most recent but also most recognized works, as evidenced by the number of authors' citations, while the Qur'an was used as the main source of Islamic ethics, as explained in the next section.

1. Islamic perspective of ethics

From an Islamic point of view, ethics is related to several Arabic terms:
- *ma'ruf* (approved);
- *khayr* (goodness);
- *haqq* (truth and right);
- *birr* (righteousness);
- *qist* (equity);
- *adl* (equilibrium and justice);
- *taqwa* (piety).

Good actions (deeds) are described as *salihat*, while bad (wrong) actions are s*ayyi'at*. However, the term that is most closely related to ethics in the Qur'an is *akhlaq* (Beekun, 1996, Al-Aidaros et al., 2013).

Islamic ethics can be defined as principles and values that are based on Islamic sources (Mohammed, 2011). They are consistent with man's abilities (Al-Ghazali, 2001) and they cover all aspects of life (Al-Qaradawi, 1994). The source of rules and principles is mostly the Qur'an (the Holy Book) and the Sunnah (the Tradition). The reason for this is that Islam is a religion that strongly affects virtually every aspect of a follower's life and it is also the main message of the Qur'an. The Prophet Muhammed indicated that the main reason why Allah sent him to the people is to improve their ethics: "I have been sent to accomplish the best of the morality" (Al-Ghazali, 2001).

---

[1] In this paper, just the term 'auditor' is also used often, but in general, the issues discussed include religious audit practitioners. They are a unique element and a feature of corporate governance in the Islamic financial architecture.

In Islam, ethics is related to faith (*iman*), religious feelings that result from following what Allah asks Muslims to do. Importantly, faith cannot be acceptable without connecting it with good deeds (Al-Ghazali, 2001). In the Qur'an, there are passages regarding this attitude towards morality. It states clearly that strong faith generates a good character, while weak faith results in a collapse of morality, and the most complete believers in *iman* are those who are the best in character (Al-Ghazali, 2001). Some verses of the Qur'an also clearly state that simply carrying out religious duties, even those as important as fasting and the pilgrimage to Mecca (along with confession of faith, prayer, and alms, the so-called "five pillars of faith"), without simultaneously keeping moral (ethical) behaviors, has little or no meaning in the eyes of God (Al-Ghazali, 2001; Saadeh et al., 2016). So, from an Islamic point of view, ethics is not just religious morality reflected in the performance of some practices.

In the opinion of many scientists (Ahmad, 2003; Al-Ghazali, 2001; Al-Qaradawi, 1994), Islam has several characteristics, but the most significant are its comprehensiveness, realism, and balance. Islamic ethics – which is connected strongly with a transcendental, religious message – is naturally influenced by these.

Ahmad (2003) defines Islam as a set of norms, values, and laws that make up the Islamic way of life. The main components of Islam are *iman* (faith), *akhlaq* (ethics), and *fiqh*. *Fiqh* is an element of legal doctrine in Islam, a secondary source of obtaining rules and regulations regarding all events and problems (Al-Kaber, 2013). It is a science – a theoretical knowledge of Islamic law.

The first two components – *iman* and *akhlaq* – are considered to be permanent and fixed at all times and for all societies. In contrast, *fiqh* may be modified and changed consistently with time and place. Islam offers systems in various areas of science, finance, and society. It is also flexible and applicable in the environment of changing times (Al-Qaradawi, 1985; Yaken, 2006).

As mentioned above, Islam provides guidance for Muslims in every situation (Al-Ghazali, 2001; Al-Qaradawi, 1994). According to the Qur'an, Muhammad says: "We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things" (The Qur'an, 16:89). Hence, to know how ethics should be applied, a Muslim needs to imitate the Prophet's behaviors.

Islamic ethics covers all aspects of life, physically, morally, spiritually, in secular form, intellectually, emotionally, individually, and collectively (Al-Qaradawi, 1996; Yaken, 2006). This comprehensive perspective to ethics does not consider a single standard only – such as the consequences of actions (as argued by utilitarian and egoism theory). Moreover, Islamic principles do not go against scientific facts and logical theories, whether they are proposed by Muslim or non-Muslim scientists (Al-Aidaros et al., 2013; Al-Qaradawi, 1996).

There are at least three types of social ethics, as claimed by Al-Aidaros et al. (2013), relating to individuals, to the family, and to society (*Ummah*). Ethics related to individuals includes honesty, restraint and self-purity, trust, truth, chastity, modesty and integrity, but also no wasting, which is a very important feature of Islam: "Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters" (The Qur'an, 7:31). It is

connected with a very important concept of Islamic philosophy, *Tawheed* (De Chatel, 2003). Islam, following *Tawheed* (unity), envisions people as integral to the environment, and it gives them a special role of trusteeship in relation to it. Being God's creation, humanity is appointed a trustee of the world and charged with looking after or governing the self and others (Abdel Haleem, 1998; The Qur'an, 8:27). Al-Qaradawi (2000) explains that people need to impose limits on their actions (to maintain balance, *supra*) in this respect, as they have a choice (Khalid, O'Brian, 1998). This concept does not give mankind unlimited control or access to God's resources (moderation – *tamaa*).

Ethics related to the family manifests itself in how its members (spouses, children, parents, etc.) are treated. Respect for parents, showing kindness to women and little ones, and justice in dealing with children are emphasized (The Qur'an, 4:19; 46:15; 17:31).

Ethics related to society, in general, is the most interesting aspect from the perspective of this paper. It involves maintaining clients' rights and goods, and treating everything that belongs to a consumer, "his honor, his wealth and his blood, as sacrosanct" (Saeed et al., 2001).

With regard to economics, Allah says: "Woe to those that deal in fraud. Those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, exact full measure. But when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due" (The Qur'an, 83:1/2/3). Regarding politics and government, the Qur'an says: "Allah commands you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice" (The Qur'an, 4:58).

The virtue of cooperation, protecting the privacy of others, refraining from gossip, prohibiting robbery, fraud, and injustice, and spreading brotherhood, friendship, and love among all members of society are examples of Islamic ethics related to society in general (Al-Aidaros et al., 2013). The essential rule in business is then honesty and fair dealing, and a Muslim businessman should, as a result, be a person of high ethical principles (Kaliffa, 2003). Islamic ethics tolerates the making of profit as well as the possession of private property, as long as the profit is not made to excess and the process of making profit does not harm others. The market should be free and not subject to manipulation – individuals engaging in trade and commerce should act fairly (Lewis, 2006). Dealing in stolen goods is forbidden (Al-Qaradawi, 1994). Advertising is not encouraged when the intention is to force up the price in times of scarcity, and so to profit at the expense of others (Lewis, 2006). Monopolistic practices – taking advantage of others through the improper exercise of economic power – is inconsistent with Islam (Abdel Haleem, 1998; Lewis, 2001). Greed (*tamaa*), as a negative value, is opposed to moderation (*iqtisad*), which is desired (Lewis, 2001).

Islamic ethical principles also take into account people's ability to implement things (Al-Qaradawi, 1996), as well as their capacity, as Allah has knowledge of the weaknesses and strengths of mankind. Justice is fundamental, according to the Qur'an (42:40): "The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree)." However, it is recommended that people be patient and forgiving of those who do wrong: "(…) if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah, for

(Allah) loves not those who do wrong" (The Qur'an, 42:40); "And if you do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: But if you show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient" (The Qur'an, 16:126). In addition, Islam realistically considers some special circumstances that allow Muslims to engage in acts originally prohibited (Al-Qaradawi, 1996).

The sense of responsibility in Islam is wide and strong – it is a responsibility to Allah, but also the *Ummah* (community), because social justice (*adl*), as well as social welfare, are emphasized in the religious message of the Qur'an (Haniffa, 2002; Lewis, 2001). The *Ummah* principle prevents excessive self-awareness and individuality beyond morality. Individual excess is seen as moral corruption. Therefore, Islam essentially prohibits waste and stinginess (Al-Qaradawi, 2000), in accordance with *Tawheed*.

Since the focus here is on accounting and auditors, the discussion is limited to ethical issues that are related to the principles of professional auditors only.

2. The influence of Islamic ethical principles on Muslim auditors' behavior

Ethical principles regarding auditors (as well as financial audit practitioners or accountants) in Muslim countries and with their source in the Qur'an and Sunnah (Ahmad et al., 2019; Al-Aidaros et al., 2011) can be characterized as follows:
- the principle of trustfulness (*amaanah*);
- the principle of integrity;
- the principle of vicegerency (*Khalifah*);
- the principle of accountability before Allah;
- the principles of sincerity, piety (*taqwa*), and righteousness;
- the principles of professional competence and diligence (*fatanah*);
- the *'adl* , *sabr* and *ihsan* principles.

The concept of *amaanah* (trust) means human beings are trustees of God's resources. The wealth and resources that man has taken upon him are part of man's trusteeship, which he has the responsibility to fulfil. It is one of the fundamental ethical principles that Mulsims need to adhere to, and it is greatly emphasized in the Qur'an and Hadith, because it shows the obligations of true Muslims' faith in Allah. Muslims must be truthful in their dealings in all aspects of activities (Ahmad et al., 2019). Honoring public trust means that people should accept the obligation to act in a way that serves the public interest and demonstrates a commitment to professionalism (Al-Aidaros et al., 2011). Islam considers the principle of public interest to be more important than n individual interest (Al-Qaradawi, 1994). Through the concept of *amaanah*, auditors (as well as accountants) are the trustees of a company's resources. Therefore, they should maintain a high degree of honesty and respect information confidentiality. Auditors and accountants cannot use confidential company information to their own advantage (Adel, Mustafa, 2013).

Amaanah comes with the concept of stewardship and responsibility. An auditor's duty is to be trustworthy in his/her practices and to refrain from causing destruction, as man is accountable to Allah for all his/her deeds (Ahmad, 2012). The responsibility towards God and *Ummah* demands that he/she disclose financial implications and business activities that can affect public lives – not only shareholders' assets. Additionally, Muslim accountants must ensure that the company engages only in *halal* (pure, not forbidden by the Qur'an and Shariah law) activities. Based on the *amaanah* concept, both accountants and auditors are obliged to refrain from engaging in activities that may jeopardise their integrity, objectivity, and independence (Abdul Rahman, 2003).

As mentioned above, Islam integrates every aspect of Muslim life. Therefore, integrity as part of Islamic ideology is highly relevant in shaping Muslims' life and conduct (Ahmad et al., 2019). The principle of integrity encompasses a person's moral integrity based on religiosity and supreme accountability to Allah, and it requires believers to be competent in their professional work (Naqvi, 2003). So, for Muslim auditors, it means working diligently and providing professional duty with the best service they can. Acting with integrity should maintain and increase public confidence, by holding *iman* (faith), as the key that protects and increases a person's integrity (Al-Qaradawi, 1994).

Khalifah means that Allah is the ultimate authority in obedience to man. Humanity is considered to be a trustee or vicegerent of God in this world (Beekun, Badawi, 2005), to manage its resources, and it must be accountable for the way they are acquired and used. People should never forget their role as God's stewards on Earth. They are encouraged to use the wealth and resources that God has provided them with. However, use does not imply abuse (The Qur'an, 59:24). Thus, to fulfil their role as God's trustee, they should follow the Prophet's model of behavior. The *Khalifah* principle implies that the interactions and relationships of man are based on justice, accountability, and trust (Parvez, 2000). So auditors – like other Muslims – who follow this rule should be sincere, honest, and truthful in their accounting practices (Ahmad, 2012). They should perform their professional duties by following Allah's commandments and avoid prohibitions because productive work and adhering to the requirement of Islamic teaching may be regarded as an act of worshipping God, and it might be a tremendous intrinsic motivator to perform better in their professional work (Ahmad et al., 2019).

The accountability principle encompasses a Muslim auditor's priority of accountability to Allah over his accountability to others (like clients), as well as his accountability to society over the client's wishes and expectations. In the literature of the subject, it is clearly stated: as vicegerent, an auditor (accountant) is accountable to Allah first and foremost, then the *Ummah*, then profession and the client (Ahmad et al., 2019). Auditors should observe all of their actions, and they will be personally accountable for all their deeds in this world. Hence, in performing their professional duties, they are accountable to ensure that all business transactions and activities comply with Shariah law and principles, and they should prepare reports truthfully and honestly, with appropriate information. Furthermore, they are responsible for verifying the religious legitimacy of all financial and business transactions.

Shariah has clear ethical guidelines concerning day-to-day financial activities and their transparency. The sincerity principle requires that auditors perform duties sincerely for Allah and without subject to external influences, such as gaining certain rewards or pressures due to their obedience to God. The concept of sincerity means sincerity, honesty, good deeds, and the freedom from false pretense. The sincerity in performing duties can benefit the profession by contributing to high productivity and efficiency in professional work, and it discourages manipulations while enhancing cooperation and trust (Ahmad et al., 2019). From an Islamic point of view, the importance of sincerity in life makes auditors do their job as a form of worship to Allah.

The principle of piety means fear of Allah, by adhering to His commandments and evading His prohibitions in any situation. Piety is then the moral filter, leading the Muslim auditor to perform righteous actions.

The righteousness principle can again be understood as imposing a moral obligation to provide high-quality professional work appropriately, thus, in accordance with Shariah rules and principles. Muslim auditors should strive for perfection in performing their professional duties. The Qur'an says: "To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward" (The Qur'an, 5:9). Therefore, auditors should enjoin in the establishment of righteousness while dealing in business (Ahmad et al., 2019).

According to Islam, auditors and accountants must have professional competency and sufficient knowledge of Shariah law related to financial transactions. Both must be sincere in performing their duties to be able to make the right decision in seeking Allah's satisfaction (Abdul Rahman, 2003). They must refrain from agreeing to perform professional duties if they have no sufficient knowledge or competency to perform them. Moreover, professional competences in Islam are especially important due to the desire to gain Allah's satisfaction. It is a very strong motivation to exercise sensitive professional and moral judgments in all their activities (Al-Aidaros et al., 2011). Auditors should observe the profession's technical and ethical principles, continually try hard to develop competence and the quality of services, and discharge professional responsibility to the best. Moreover, they should perform their duty beyond the expectations of their clients because their life should be as perfect as possible (Al-Qaradawi, 1994). Also, Muslims believe that reward in the next life is much more important than the reward in this life (such as fees or salary). Thus, professional auditors and accountants are expected to carry out their work as best as possible in this society, not for the sake of money (Al-Aidaros et al., 2011).

The principles of *'adl*, *sabr*, and *ihsan* emphasize the values that Islam stresses to be incorporated in the daily Muslim life. With respect to *ihsan* (kindness), an auditor (or accountant) is encouraged to provide perfect services beyond the expectations of the clients (Al-Qaradawi, 1994).

'Adl as a principle is viewed as the characteristics of Allah himself, and it means giving everyone his/her rights, regardless of race, religion, wealth or job (Al-Gazali, 2001; Al-Qaradawi, 1994). The Qur'an says: "Nor can goodness and evil be equal.

Repel (evil) with what is better" (The Qur'an, 41:34). Then clients and co-workers should be treated by auditors as well as possible, as well as they would like to be treated themselves. Moreover, auditors should treat the clients even better than the clients treat auditors, without having to force it through special regulations (Al-Aidaros et al., 2011). From this principle comes the partial obligation to maintain objectivity and independence. Auditors, by definition, should be objective in their work and free from conflicts of interest in discharging their professional responsibilities. If auditors in public practice should be independent when providing auditing and other attestation services, then the *'adl* principle strengthens them in their pursuit to be objective and exercise independence in their opinions without any bias (Al-Aidaros et al., 2011).

Justice is the shortest way to achieve *iman*, according to Muhammad's teaching. An order to behave fairly with every Muslim or non-Muslim is connected with acting justly, so also acting faithfully. "Be obvious determinedly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and do not let the hate of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to faithfulness" (The Qur'an, 5:8). Besides, Muslims are requested to verify any information received, especially if it may negatively affect others. "If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwittingly and afterwards become full of repentance for what you have done" (The Qur'an, 49:6). Before making any judgment, a professional must make sure that information is verified as correct and accurate (Al-Aidaros et al., 2011).

Sabr, which means endurance or, more accurately, perseverance and persistence, is one of the two parts of the Muslim faith. In the Qur'an, we read: "(…) and if you do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: But if you show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient" (The Qur'an, 16:126). *Sabr* teaches followers to remain spiritually steadfast and to keep doing good actions in the personal and collective domains, specifically when facing opposition or encountering problems, setbacks, or unexpected and unwanted results. It is then patience in the face of all unexpected and unwanted outcomes. With respect to *sabr*, a professional auditor is expected to perform audit work, for example, even when he has not yet received the audit fees for previous work done and without caring about possible, unwanted consequences, like a client's displeasure and loss (Al-Aidaros et al., 2011).

Conclusion

In the accounting literature, studies refer to "accounting ethics" as an ethical code of conduct that accountants or auditors should have (Velasquez, 2006). Usually, it contains similar ethical principles and rules that a professional must obey in order to raise the image of the profession in public (Brown et al., 2007; Mele, 2005), so even if they not yet applicable in countries without such code, they can be a good basis to develop one.

The investigation of the principles of Islamic morality that influence Muslim audit practitioners' ethical conduct shows that the source of ethics is quite specific. In Islamic countries, it is mostly the Qur'an with the Sunnah and Hadith, so these sources are transcendental because they are religious. Thus, Muslim auditors do not deal with the problem of a rule-based approach to their professional duties. In the opinion of many scientists, it remains the main problem for the attitude of auditors and accountants in many countries, as well as a challenge for professional education in this field. Since the beginning, the framework of their ethics has been principle-based. The comprehensiveness of Islam and its integrity includes ethical issues, and it identifies what is wrong and what is right in a religious context, according to Shariah law, with its roots in the Qur'an.

Thus, the professional codes of ethics that have commonly developed in other countries (which belong to another cultural circle) may not be sufficient for Muslim needs, as they are not extensive or comprehensive enough from the Islamic perspective, although many scholars agree that Islam shares most of the values and principles "with the Western understanding."

Some principles may be particularized, as this paper shows, by finding an additional source in Muhammad's teaching, which can be a moral clue that emphasizes the importance of an auditor's ethical behavior. A good example is the *sabr*, *ihsan* or '*adl* principles, discussed in the article, as well as attention to other elements, like *iman* or consistency between principles and actions and focus on reward in the afterlife. In Muslim countries, it is assumed that *iman* (faith) is part of every ethical construct. Thus, in Islam, professional audit practitioners are not solely responsible to their clients and users of accounting information verified by the auditor, but first and foremost, they are accountable and responsible to Allah and then to others, i.e. society.

The responsibility to Allah means that auditors have an ethical obligation to act and work to achieve the acceptance of God by following the guidance in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Compliance with the Qur'an and Sunnah is here a key. Auditors, like other Muslim professionals, are obliged to reject any work if it is against Islamic principles (The Qur'an, 5:47). The scope and nature of services must be within the acceptable limits of Islam (The Qur'an, 5:44/45). It also explains why the understanding of ethical constructs in codes of conduct are not the same in countries that belong to different cultural circles, even if they are generally very similar.. For example, the construct of "honoring public trust" means that auditors and accountants must act to meet society's expectations in a way that is Islamically acceptable. While many ethical codes of conduct do not have any problem with loan interest, in Islam, interest (*riba*) is forbidden, and a Muslim accountant or auditor cannot take it, even if the society he/she is operating in thinks it is the right thing to do (Al-Gazali, 2001; Al-Qaradawi, 1996; The Qur'an, 278/279). In the author's opinion, it would be worth undertaking further, in-depth research to assess the impact of cultural norms on professional ethics and its norms, not necessarily in the Islamic cultural circle.

References

Abdel Haleem H. (1998), *Islam and the environment*, Ta-Ha, London.

Abdul Rahman A.R. (2003), *Ethics in accounting education: contribution of the Islamic principles of maslaehah*, "IUUM Journal Economics and Management", 11 (1), pp. 2–8.

Adel M.S., Mustafa M.H. (2013), *The need of accounting standards for Islamic financial institutions: evidence from AAOIFI*, "Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research", 4 (1), pp. 64–76.

Ahmad K. (2003), *The Challenge of Global Capitalism: An Islamic Perspective. Making Globalization Good: The Moral Challenge of Global Capitalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Ahmad N.L., Yusof R., Mustaffa W.S., Wahid H., Halim H. (2019), *Developing Ethical Accounting Students through Incorporating Islamic Ethics into Accounting Curriculum: The Educator's Perspectives*, "International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences", 9 (1), pp. 248–270.

Ahmed A.A. (2012), *Accounting in Islamic perspective: a timely opportunity a timely challenge*, "ASA University Review", 6 (2), pp. 11–31.

Al-Aidaros A.H., Shamsudin F.M., Idris M. (2011), *The Accountants' Ethical Code of Conduct from An Islamic Perspective: Case in Yemen*, "Journal of Global Management", 2 (1), pp. 98–123.

Al-Aidaros A.H., Shamsudin F.M., Idris M. (2013), *Ethics and Ethical Theories from an Islamic Perspective*, "International Journal of Islamic Thought", 4, pp. 1–13.

Al-Ghazali (2001), *Muslim's Morality*, Darul Al-Qalam Publication, Beirut.

Al-Kaber M. (2013), *Techniki finansowe banków islamskich*, "Optimum. Studia Ekonomiczne", 3 (63), pp. 174–194.

Al-Qaradawi Y. (1985), *The Iman (Faith) and Life*, Arabia Publication, Doha.

Al-Qaradawi Y. (1994), *The Priorities of Understanding*, Darul Al-Ressalh Publication, Beirut.

Al-Qaradawi Y. (1996), *The General Characteristics of Islam*, Darul Al-Ressalh Publication, Beirut.

Al-Qaradawi Y. (2000), *Safeguarding the environment in Islamic Sharia*, Dar Al-Khaleej, Sharjah.

Beekun R. (1996), *Islamic Business Ethics*, University of Nevada, Nevada.

Beekun R., Badawi J. (2005), *Balancing ethical responsibility among multiple organizational stakeholders: the Islamic perspective*, "Journal of Business Ethics", 60, pp. 131–145.

Brown P., Stocks M., Wilder W. (2007), *Ethical exemplification and the AICPA code of professional conduct: An empirical investigation of auditor and public perceptions*, "Journal of Business Ethics", 71 (1), pp. 39–71.

Burks B. (2006), *The Impact of Ethics Education and Religiosity on the Cognitive Moral Development of Senior Accounting and Business Students in Higher Education*, Ph.D. dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Davie, FL.

Cheney G. (2002), *Ripples from Enron*, "Australian CPA", 72 (2), pp. 62–64.

Cullinan C.(2004), *Enron as a Symptom of Audit Process Breakdown: Can the Sarbanes-Oxley Act Cure the Disease?*, "Critical Perspectives on Accounting", 15 (6/7), pp. 853–864.

Delaney J. (2005), *The Impact of Ethics Education on the Moral Reasoning Ability of Accounting Students*, Ph.D. dissertation, Ambrose University, Davenport, IA.

Elegido J.M. (2000), *Fundamental of Business Ethics: A Developing Countries Perspective*, Spectrum Books Ltd., Lagos.

Haniffa R. (2002), *Social Responsibility Disclosure: An Islamic Perspective*, "Indonesian Management & Accounting Research", 1 (2), pp. 128–46.

Hayes R., Schilder A., Dassen R., Wallage P. (1999), *Principles of Auditing: An International Perspective*, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, Berkshire.

Herron T. L., Gilbertson D. L. (2004), *Ethical Principles vs. Ethical Rules: The Moderating Effect of Moral Development on Audit Independence Judgments*, "Business Ethics Quarterly", 14 (3), pp. 499–523.

Kaliffa A.S. (2003), *The Multidimensional Nature and Purpose of Business in Islam*, "The Islamic Perspective Journal", 7 (1&2), pp. 1–25.

Keim M.T., Grant C.T. (2003), *To Tell or Not to Tell: An Auditing Case in Ethical Decision Making and Conflict Resolution*, "Issues in Accounting Education", 18 (4), pp. 397–407.

Khalid F., O'Brian J. (eds.) (1992), *Islam and ecology*, Cassell, London.

Lewis K. (2006), *Accountability and Islam.* Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Accounting and Finance in Transition, April 10–12, Adelaide, Australia.

Lewis M.K. (2001), *Islam and Accounting*, "Accounting Forum", 25 (2), pp. 103–127.

McLean B., Elkind P. (2003), *The Smartest Guys in the Room: The Amazing Rise and Scandalous Fall of Enron*, Penguin Books, London.

Mele D. (2005), *Ethical education in accounting: Integrating rules, values and virtues*, "Journal of Business Ethics", 57 (1), pp. 97–109.

Mohammed A. (2011), *The Role of Yemeni Accountants in Fighting Corruption*, "The Legal Accountant", 15 (9), pp. 30–37.

Naqvi S.N.H. (2003), *Perspectives on morality and human being: a contribution to Islamic economic*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester.

Nwagboso J. (2008), *Professional Ethics, Skill and Standards*, Inspirationz Media Konsult, Maiden Edition, Jos [Nigeria].

Ogbonna G., Ebimobowei A. (2011), *Ethical Compliance by the Accountant on the Quality of Financial Reporting and Performance of Quoted Companies in Nigeria*, "Asian Journal of Business Management", 3 (3), pp. 152–160.

Parvez Z. (2000), *Building a new society: an Islamic approach to social change*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester.

Rachels J., Rachels S. (1993), *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, McGraw-Hill, New York.

Saadeh Y., Alsmady A., Warrad L.H., Idris M., Elrajabi M.R. (2016), *The Accounting Profession between Religious and Professional Ethical Codes*, "International Journal of Business and Social Science", 7 (10), pp. 35–43.

Saeed M., Ahmed Z., Mukhtar S. (2001), *International marketing ethics from an Islamic perspective: A value-maximization approach*, "Journal of Business Ethics", 32 (2), pp. 127–142.

Satava D., Caldwell C., Richards L. (2006), *Ethics and the Auditing Culture: Rethinking the Foundation of Accounting and Auditing*, "Journal of Business Ethics", 64, pp. 271–284, doi 10.1007/s10551-005-0556-y.

The Qur'an (2011), Ishi Press.

Velasquez M. (2006), *Business Ethics: Concepts & Cases*, Person Education International, London.

Yaken (2006), *What is the Meaning of My Belong to Islam?* Darul Al-Ressalh Publication, Beirut.

Internet sources

De Chatel F. (2003), *Pioneer of the environment*, http://www.islamonline.net/english/introducingislam/Environment/topic02.shtml (access 18.03.2016).