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Research Article

Exploring Innovative Avenues for Muslim Students in Contemporary Society and Technology

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Abstract. Innovation is the practical process of moving an idea from concept to reality, and this idea can result in the introduction of new goods or services or improvement in offering goods or services. Scholars like Drucker (2002), Roger (2003) and Baregheh, et al (2009) have worked assiduously with different topics on innovation. The main intent of this work is to project some innovative works which Muslim students can do that can make them a better person in the society. This paper will explain to Muslim students on how to surmount the problem of scarcity by learning works, and by the time they finish the learning, they will be able to put it into practice, and by God's grace, it will yield them a profit. The paper will explain in detail on the reason why Muslim students should adventure on the innovative skills. It will explain and give clue on some areas in which Muslims students can explore their innovative skills in today's society and technology. These areas of innovation could be in

different fields like health, science and technology, creative arts etc. To make this work well understood, we went to collect data from different informants/innovators, and we interviewed them. We learned different ways of becoming a great innovator, and these ways shall be narrated in this paper. Theory of Innovation will be used to analyze our thoughts.

Keywords : Innovative, Muslim students, Contemporary Society, Technology, Theory of innovation.

INTRODUCTION

An idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption, (Roger, 2003). This implies that, innovation is the bringing out an idea or things of which people see as a new thing. For Muslim students, innovation means everything that is not in accordance with laid-down rules. Breaking such rules in terms of education and learning environments is a way to achieve the creativity they crave for themselves. Learning in an innovative society, they can use all their creativeness to become fit for the future. Muslim students need to venture into another some innovative works that will serve as a source of income for them. Students need to be helping their parents in terms of making money independently. They do not need to request from their parents when they are in need of money all the time, though it is primarily the parents' responsibility. Mr. Ògúnníran who is one of the informants said during the research that he was working with a publishing company to get money for helping himself in school because his father was too old to cater for his education. There are lot of students who are working in radio stations, some are selling goods etc, to cater for themselves. These are part of the innovations that all Muslims students should explore in our contemporary society driven by technology.

The purpose of this article is to understand how Muslim students determine innovation in line with the Islamic framework. Islam does not provide a framework for assessing information, yet Islamic scholars assess innovation in their own peculiar ways. Prior to this paper, there was a work conducted examining how innovation can be effectively assessed in Islam. However, the paper was not focused on how Islam assesses innovation in the real sense of it. It does not look at the required support of Muslims and the application of Islamic reasoning to determine effective and approved innovation in Islam. It also does not examine how Innovation is rejected in Islam. The need for this work is due to breach in other works. This paper will explore of Muslim students innovative thinking, in contemporary society and technology.

This article was conducted with the assistance of four informants, in four different innovative works. Each informant provided unique insight into their knowledge and understanding of innovation in students environment and its assessment. The uniqueness of innovation research in Muslim students society and

technology is the explorative nature of this paper which lends itself to qualitative study, such as religious ethnography and discourse analysis. This will form two key approaches. Religious ethnography will assist in eliciting responses from each informant, and discourse analysis will be used to identify different perspectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, many studies have been carried out on innovation both in Islam and outside the religion. Some of these include Drucker (2002), Rogers (2003), Baregheh, et al. (2009), Edison, et al. (2014), Taylor (2017), Hughes et al. (2018), Jain (2021), etc. Precisely, these works have investigated the adaptation, social housing, Islamic creativity, software measurement, discipline in innovations; to mention but a few. However, previous researches have not paid much attention to the innovative avenues for students to explore in contemporary society and technology, particularly for the Muslims students.

Innovation creates a way of producing wealth and ability to kill the destitution in the society. One can venture into different works like creativity, cooking and so on. Drucker (2002:18) says thus:

Innovation is the specific function of entrepreneurship, whether in an existing business, a public service institution, or a new venture started by a lone individual in the family kitchen. It is the means by which the entrepreneur either creates new wealth-producing resources or endows existing resources with enhanced potential for creating wealth.

This scholar above explained that innovation based on one specific thing, it could be either on the existing work or new works. He explained that one could generate an income by engaging oneself in some work.

Innovation has different stages, so one can venture on any, based on his/her choice, preference and competency. No shyness in innovation, one should be focused on what he/she is doing. Baregheh, et al. (2009:1333) also say thus:

Innovation is the multi-stage process whereby Organizations transform ideas into new/improved products, service or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace.

These scholars said that the word innovation is a multi-stage process in which an organization used her knowledge to produce a product. They also said that businesses could be rated by doing competition so as to know the difference and quality of their products in the market.

According to research, Muslims learned paper making from the Chinese, and they passed this knowledge on to Europeans. Muslims produced new scientific, medical, and philosophical texts based on earlier Greek works. Muslims have been learning innovative works ever since 21st century. So, with this, there is nothing wrong if Muslim students can start learning innovative works to make a change and better future to the society.

Theory: Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The diffusion of innovations theory is a hypothesis outlining how new technological and other promotions extend in every part of the societies and cultures, from introduction to widespread adoption. The diffusion of innovations theory seeks to explain how and why new ideas and practices are adopted, including why the adoption of new ideas can be spread out over long periods. The way in which innovations are communicated to different parts of society and the subjective opinions associated with the innovations are important factors in how quickly diffusion occurs. This theory is frequently referred to when companies are developing a marketing strategy for new products and developing market share.

The diffusion of innovations theory was developed by Rogers, a communication theorist at the University of New Mexico, in 1962. The theory explains the passage of a new idea through stages of adoption by different people who participate in or begin using the new idea. The main people in the diffusion of innovations theory are:

- 1) Innovators: Those who are open to risks and the first to try new ideas.
- 2) Late majority: People who follow the early majority into adopting the innovation as part of their daily life and are also part of the general majority.
- 3) Early majority: Those who pave the way for the use of an innovation within mainstream society and are part of the general population.
- 4) Laggards: People who lag behind the general population in adopting innovative products and new ideas.
- 5) Early adopters: People who are interested in trying new technologies and establishing their utility in society.

The diffusion of innovations theory was developed in part by integrating previous sociological theories of behavioral change.

Factors that affect the rate of innovation diffusion include the mix of rural to urban within a society's population, the society's level of education, and the extent of industrialization and development. Different societies are likely to have different adoption rates (the rate at which members of a society accept a new innovation).

Innovative Works that Muslim Students can Explore on

Adoption rates for different types of innovation vary. For example, a society may have adopted the internet faster than it adopted the automobile due to cost, accessibility, and familiarity with technological change. Innovations are essential for today's world. More so, learning drives innovations. So, why can it not be the other way around as well? So, these are the innovative works below:

Make Money from Social Media

If Muslim students are big on TikTok, Twitter (now X), Facebook or Instagram, they can make money (and get free stuff) by advertising products for brands. They

will have more luck with companies that are relevant to their brands. If they are BookTok influencer, the most obvious products to promote will relate to books and reading. This innovation does not go against the Islamic teaching, so, by having a full passion for it, these students can become a big students in the campus, aside from that, they will be able to cater for their needs without disturbing their parents.

Become a YouTuber

Whether it's from ads or the opportunities for sponsored content, there are some serious money to be made on YouTube. You do not need millions of subscribers to earn money from YouTube videos. Just pick a topic that interests you—either on Islamic teaching or other things like games, comedy or in academic fields—and put together simple guides or reviews. With a good consistency on this, they can make money.

Resell Textbooks/Notebooks/Literature texts

Buying and selling different types of books can make Muslim students better in the society if they do not see it as trash. All they need for accomplishing this is to investigate on the books that will be okay and beneficial for each course offered in each department. It is not a must to buy all the books need for all the courses at a time. They can start little by little. Then, at the start of the new term, find the new students taking each course. Sell the books to them for more than you bought them, with this idea, you are in simple supply and demand. For Muslim students who are studying English or Yorùbá languages, they can make money when it is time for buying literature texts. It is an innovation of using one's initiative. Offer to buy your classmates' literature texts at a cheaper rate, collect the money to get the books. At least, student with this innovative ideas will get his/her gain as pocket money.

Publish a Magazine or Blog

The easiest place to start when it comes to publishing a magazine would be to focus on your main interests. That way, you'll know enough potential contributors to start filling out your publication. As a student, speak to tutors, experts and your classmates to see if they would like to chip in. Once you have got your writers (and your content), you could place adverts in your magazine or on your blog. Avast, it's not all about the money all the time. This kind of project will look great on your CV too, if you do not know.

Writing Career

This also means creative writing. Writing is a skill that anybody can explore. In fact, it is an integral language skill that Muslim students are supposed to possess. However, creative Writing is not just a skill; it is also a means to sharpen the imaginative and innovative mind of students with regards to their environments. If our Muslim brothers and sisters can explore in writing, they will not regret doing it because it is lucrative. We have a lot of students especially the Muslim students who are creative writers, they make money from writing. These set of students have participated in different writing competitions (both in English and Yorùbá

languages) and they won big prizes. In fact, most of their books got published due to their excellent performances.

In the course of our research, we interviewed Saheed Sunday (author of Rewrite). Sunday Saheed is a student of English and Literary Studies at Lagos State University. He said something about writing as an innovation during the interview thus:

.... When writing is linked to the exposure to new experiences, it becomes an innovation. It is through writing that readers get introduced to new things they might have never have come across before. I mean, who needs to go to the United States when your books can take you through the whole axis?

With this statement made, it is no doubt that if Muslim students learn creativity, it will make them smile to the banks. One thing is that, they should not be pessimistic in their quest for knowledge but be optimistic.

Become a Graphic Designer

If you have got some graphic design skills, why not offer to produce handouts for your lecturers? By doing this, it would be the best way for you to study their subjects/courses in more details, and will likely save them a lot of time. Apart from that, you can be in charge of designing all flyers used in the campus during departmental programs or religious programs. In fact, during election period in school, a student with this skill will make a huge amount of money from aspirants who need flyers to campaign. On this, we interviewed Ọdúnjọ Azeez (a graduate student of O.A.U). He said that he was doing graphic design to help himself in time of need. He added that:

Ó mà tí pẹ gan-an tí mo ti ń ẹ graphic design. Kò sóhun tó burú ńbẹ tí àwọn Muslim brothers àti àwọn sisters bá lè máa ẹ é, fún ànǹfààní ara wọn náà ni. So, by doing this, ó máa jẹ kí gbogbo nńkan rọrùn.

(It is quite long that I have been doing a graphic design job. There is nothing bad if Muslim brothers and sisters can do it, it is for their own benefit. So, by doing this, it will make things easier for them.)

With what Odunjo Azeez said, it will be of great benefit for the Muslim students who find all means to do this. In addition, this is part of the reasons why Muslim students should explore in innovative skills that will be giving them money.

Laundry Services

Muslim students can also explore this. All they need to do is to collect other students' dirty clothes and take them to their laundry for washing and dry cleaning. We are probably not helping to fight the whole "lazy students" here. But, if your fellow students/colleagues cannot be bothered to take their washing to the laundry (or do not know how to use a washing machine), why not do it for them? There is nothing bad in that as far as you are collecting your money. In fact, after the laundry, try to iron the clothes. This will attract more customers.

Set up a Virtual Language Course

Are you bilingual or multilingual or polyglot? If so, you could be making some serious cool cash from something that probably seems completely natural to you. There are lot of ways to make money from your language skills. Do not say this is for linguistics students alone, students from other departments can also do it. Nothing is intricate as far as you can try it. One of the best and easiest ways of making money is to offer language classes over Zoom or Skype. That way, you can sell your services to people all around the world without ever leaving your room.

Become a Photographer

This is another exploring avenue that Muslim students can go for in today's society and technology. A lot of students, workers and workers and other members of the public need passports outside there, if you can afford to do this, you will be counting thousands of naira on a monthly basis. Also, most of the students in the campus cannot do without photo shoots whether they are celebrating birthday, matriculation, convocation or other events. In fact, during the time of matriculation and convocation, students would like to take pictures, so with this, you can be their plug. This is not limited to the school environment, in fact, outside the school, people need photographs—passports or pictures. During an event or a program, students with this innovative skill can go there to make their cool cash. Just as men do this, women are not exempted as well. What calls for money does not exclude anyone because everything about everyone points to the fact that everyone is unique in their own way.

Start a Tutoring Service

Private tutors get paid seriously with good money. Naturally, you can market yourself as a tutor for school students in whichever subject you're studying at universities, but do not limit yourself. If you're studying English language but did well in Mathematics at school, offer to help kids with this too. If Muslim students follow the guide to becoming a tutor, they can also tutor online to expand their customers base. A lot of students in AAUA, OAU, LASU and other institutions are doing this to cater for themselves.

Offer a CV Design or Review Service

Some people feel a bit uncomfortable putting a CV together, especially when it's their first time of doing it. Our Muslim brothers and sisters in higher institutions should try to learn this, if they do not know it. But, if they have got to know this before, they can start making money into their pulses. For those that do not know it yet, they should learn it by all means, to brush up on their expertise. After that, they could then offer their services as a résumé reviewer.

Start a Painting Work

Most of the students in higher institutions of learning cannot do without fancy things. They love seeing their rooms or apartments attractively. Just as no money is small, so, no work is small. If Muslim students can start doing this skill by helping their friends or other students to paint or decorate their rooms or apartments, they

will be making money indubitably. Some might be thinking or saying that the painting work is for men, but if I may ask, if a women do it, won't they collect their money? Do you know that some women are driving motor, riding bicycle and tricycles outside there, if you do not know, go to Ijèbú-Òde, Lagos and Ibàdàn to mention but few. With this, I think this example will goad Muslim students to explore in painting.

Ways of becoming a great Innovator

There are many ways to help the Muslim students to become a great innovator without any problem. As we all know that to become a great person is not a day stint, also, one must adhere to some rules and guidelines for them to achieve their aims and objectives. These are the ways in which Muslims students can become the great innovators as they wish to:

Consistency

Being consistent in business builds trust and improves efficiency. Consistency is important, especially in challenging times when people want certainty and reassurance. One's business plans will define his/her purpose, vision and goals to achieve those plans. Consistency is carrying out something the same way, or something staying the same as it's achieved in a particular way. The best example of this could be when a painter designs or paints a wall to achieve the same color and look overall. Muslim students who are consistent always behave in the same way, have the same attitudes toward people or things, or achieve the same level of success in something.

Be Optimistic

Optimism is one of the ways that can help Muslim students become the successful innovators in their works or skills. They should believe that life and, more specifically, their future can and will be better. Their nature is to believe that the work they put into themselves and their goals will eventually and inevitably result in positive change

Say No To Shyness!

Shyness causes ones to keep others at a distance and avoid social situations. It can make them feel self-conscious or insecure during social interactions with others. Research made it clear to us that one might become sweaty, feel like he has a stomach pain, stumble over his/her words, or all of the above. This act may let you lose your customers, if you do not kill the obstacle—shyness. Muslim students who are in this shoe can overcome it by trying these steps listed below:

- 1) Explore what you're good at
- 2) Stop thinking that everyone is looking at you
- 3) Do not self-sabotage or avoid social situations
- 4) Welcome setbacks and work on it.

Avoid Fear

In the world of business, that fear can manifest in various ways—fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of the unknown, fear of obstacles, and even fear of success. Fear can be crippling, but it can also be a motivator. Fear can keep you on your toes, making you work harder to achieve your goals. A repugnance to failure might prevent business owners from taking their ventures to the next level and getting out of their comfort zone. The first step you can follow in freeing yourself from a limiting fear of failure is to consciously separate your identity from that of your business. Dear Muslim students, failing in business does not make you a failure, it is rather a stepping stone to try afresh. Whatever that makes you fear in your business, kill it!

Be Prayerful

You are thinking about how prayer could be a way of becoming a great innovator? It can make you become. In everything man does in life, prayer is the bedrock. Islam teaches about this, in fact Yorùbá people do say “Àdúrà ni idà Múmìní” (Prayer is the sword of Muslims.) Read all the Muslim prayer books to know the best prayer to be doing for your business’ growth. When you are going out, do call unto Allah to help you and guide your business. By doing this, the business will be going well.

CONCLUSION

We have explained the meaning of innovation based on the scholars. The theory of diffusion of innovation was used to make this work well understood, and then, we have talked on different innovative skills or works that Muslim students in today’s society and technology could explore that would be generating money for them either in supporting their education or catering for their lives. In addition, we provided the ways that would help the Muslim students to become great in their innovative skills. If they pay attention to all these steps we provided, there is no doubt, they will become a great innovators.

Table of Informants

During this research work, we interviewed some people for the credibility of the work. We learned a lot from them on how to become a successful innovators, and they told us the routes they took before they could achieve their aims as innovators. These people are in the table below:

S/N	Name	Work	Age	Date
1.	Sunday Saheed	Student and Author	19yrs	Oct. 04, 2024
2.	Mr. Ògúnníran O.	Graduate and Publisher	45yrs	Oct. 07, 2024
3.	Bilaminu O. K.	Graduate and Àgbo Seller	29yrs	Oct. 10, 2024

4.	Ọdúnjọ Azeez	Graduate and Graphic Designer	24yrs	Oct. 20, 2024
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Table 1: The table shows the Informants met on research field.

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