

Islamic Legislation on Wealth Acquisition: A Critical Examination of Crypto-currency

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Abstract

Islamic legislation on wealth acquisition is an integral part of Islamic economic system. Crypto-currency is a new technological development in the global financial system. This development has become a contentious issue among Islamic economists, financial experts, jurists, scholars, and institutions. Many unsuspecting Muslims are also cynical about its appropriateness or otherwise in their economic and financial activities. This paper adopted a qualitative methodology, which relied on article journals, textbooks, internet sources, fatāwā (verdicts) of Islamic scholars and Islamic bodies. The paper also derived logical deduction and conclusion from the Qur'ān and Ahādith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]). The paper found that, generally, crypto-currencies are used to acquire wealth. It revealed that, some seemingly Sharī' ah compliant crypto-currencies are used to acquire wealth. Although, most crypto-currencies do not conform to the Islamic concept of wealth acquisition, the paper concluded that, Sharī' ah compliant crypto-currencies should and could be better developed to accommodate Muslims and Muslims investors, in their bid to acquire wealth.

Keywords: Crypto-currency; Islamic Legislation; Wealth Acquisition

INTRODUCTION

Muslims believe Islam is a complete way of life that leaves nothing unexplained. Muslim's way of life is basically based on and guided by the Qur'ān and the Aḥādīth. These two sources prescribe many religious rules such that the bulk of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) heritage deals with forms of economic behaviour and related business relations (Moten & Bajulaiye-Shashi, 1990; Haque et al., 1992). The provisions of the Qur'ān and the Aḥādīth have continued to meet new developments in human society. One of such new developments is crypto-currency. Crypto-currency is a digital or virtual currency which uses cryptographic functions to conduct intermediate exchange of goods and financial transactions (Bunjaku et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2022). Several financial organisations have given extensive financial and technological definitions and features of crypto-currency (Dourado & Brito, 2014; Houben & Snyers, 2018; World Bank, 2018; Härdle et al., 2019; Perkins, 2020; Chiu & Koepl, 2022). The European Central Bank (ECB) defines crypto-currency as a type of unregulated digital currency that is typically issued and controlled by its developers and is used and accepted by members of a specific virtual community (European Central Bank, 2012).

The World Bank defines crypto-currencies as digital representations of value denominated in their own unit of account, as opposed to e-money, which is simply a digital payment mechanism that represents and is denominated in fiat money (Daskalakis & Georgitseas, 2020; Nawang & Azmi, 2021). There are two common categorisations of crypto-currencies. These are: Alternative Crypto-currency Coins and Tokens. The examples of Alternative Crypto-currency Coins (Altcoins), also called Store of Value (SoV) crypto-currency are Bitcoin, Litecoin, Ripple etc., with Bitcoin being the commonest and the most traded with. They act as online currencies and are used as a peer-to-peer payment. Tokens are not currency

coins; they are typically associated with a smart card contract. Types of tokens include Work tokens; Utility tokens; Asset-backed tokens; Revenue tokens; Equity tokens; Security tokens; Buy-back tokens etc. These categories of crypto-currencies are not mutually exclusive categories. Towards the tail end of 2021, the crypto market's value was put at a humongous amount of over \$2.9 trillion, but later faltered to below \$1 trillion in value in January, 2022 ([Howcroft, 2022](#)).

This new development of crypto-currency has continued to attract heated debates across Islamic circles, as to its permissibility or otherwise. As a sub-branch of economics dealing with the Islamic economic system and its impact on the economic variables and decisions ([Moten & Bajulaiye-Shashi, 1990](#)), Islamic economics is considered important contributor for scientific discussion on the matter. Furthermore, Islamic economics is also considered as knowledge and application of Shari'ah injunctions and rules that prevent injustice in the acquisition and disposal of material resources in order to provide human satisfaction ([Zaman, 2009](#)). It is within this purview that that paper intends to examine crypto-currency and acquisition of wealth in Islam.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the emergence of Bitcoin in 2009, crypto-currency has gradually become a global financial phenomenon. The development of crypto-currency has triggered concerned Islamic scholars, jurists, financial experts, and institutions of Islamic finances and economics to look into the extent to which this new form of currency aligns with the permissibility in Islamic economic system or otherwise. Some of them are also concerned with how this new technology could be improved upon to accommodate Islamic economic tenets. To start with, [Evans \(2015\)](#) and [Polas et al. \(2020\)](#) contend that any form of crypto-currency is a more appropriate medium of exchange in Islamic

banking and finance than *ribā* (usury)-backed central bank fiat currencies, as it is substantially liberated from interest rate. With regard to risk-sharing and cost sharing, [Evans \(2015\)](#) further argues that crypto-currency, operates according to *mushārah* (joint enterprise/partnership), in which 'miners' operate as partners, who share the costs and benefits of maintaining the system.

[Polas et al. \(2020\)](#) argue that, virtual currency is a form of money and fulfils money related issues (mode of exchange, unit of record, and store of noteworthy worth). It is therefore, one of the types of currencies that emerged as a result of the process of creating and developing money ([Oziev & Yandiev, 2017](#)), transcending from the era of barter, gold, silver coins, and gradually paper money, to a digital form ([Rosele et al., 2022](#)). Meanwhile, [Oziev & Yandiev \(2017\)](#) view that, crypto-currency, particularly Bitcoin and its likes, for saving purposes, investment and accumulation are impermissible under the Shari'ah. [Asif \(2018\)](#), however, concludes that, crypto-currencies' technology is permissible and their different aspects and features determine their permissibility or otherwise.

Crypto-currency has been argued as impermissible in Islam because of high volatility; absence of intrinsic value; high speculation; uncertainty; and absence of legal and government's control ([Siswanto et al., 2020](#); [Khan, 2023](#)). It is in this connection that Tajdid and Tarjih Assembly of Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah along with the the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI) issued *fatāwā* against crypto-currencies ([CNN Business, 2021](#); [The Jakarta Post, 2021](#); [Yahoo! Finance, 2022](#)). The Syrian Islamic Council (SIC) also issued a *fatwā*, declaring that crypto-currencies as *ḥarām* (forbidden), based on their inherent inconsistencies with Islamic economic system. [Siswanto et al. \(2020\)](#) conclude that, based on the *fatāwā* against crypto-currency, Muslims would be reluctant to use them for transaction, and this would inhibit its development in Muslim countries.

Available records however show that, some Muslim dominated countries have started regulating and accepting the use of crypto-currencies. For instance, in Malaysia, crypto-currencies are being used to trade, and many Malaysian investors and citizens significantly perceive crypto-currencies and digital assets as valuable, rather than risky (Sukumaran et al., 2022). There are several other countries including Saudi-Arabia and United Arab Emirates (Dubai in particular), where Islamic inclined crypto-currencies such as: OneGram Crypto-currency, NoorCoin Crypto-currency, Bayan Token Crypto-currency, ADAB Solution and Stellar Crypto-currency etc., are thriving, though with some challenges (Aliyu et al., 2020). As argued by Shariyah Review Bureau (2018), some forms of crypto-currencies, particularly tokens, possess an innovative way to raise capital and can be Shari'ah compliant if structured correctly. This explains why, even SIC that declared crypto-currencies as forbidden, and Ali al-Qaradaghi, the Secretary-General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) and an expert in Islamic economics, contemplate that, if a centralised bank or other reliable authority put various mechanisms in place to set crypto-currencies prices and prevent their manipulation, then using crypto-currencies would not be forbidden and Muslim countries can adopt crypto-currency, as long as they are not mixed up with interest (*ribā*) or other financial transactions that Islam forbids (Rafii, 2022).

Although the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) warned against crypto-currencies, as they are not monitored by any regulatory body, yet, the Saudi government clearly sees merit in blockchain technology and is actively working to implement it into its financial systems (Rafii, 2022). The Accounting and Audit Organisation for Islamic Financial Institution (AAOIFI) concludes that, crypto-currency is a store of value, unit of measure, means of exchange; although extremely volatile, but it is permitted for

transactions and commercial activities (Ali, 2018). AAOIFI adds that, for crypto-currencies to be Shari'ah compliant, they must be issued and guaranteed by the government, free from illegal uses, and must not be speculative. In addition, some Islamic financial experts and scholars, including Adnan Al-Zahrani, ex-chairman of the Shari'ah Supervisory Board of Al-Jazeera and Monzer Kahf, Professor at the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies, do not see anything wrong in crypto-currency because it is a process of creating and developing money, from gold to silver coins, to paper, and now virtual money, and believe its technology, in as much it is traded in the open market, like other currencies. Ahmed Kamel Midin Meera, the former dean of the Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance at the International Islamic University of Malaysia, however, adds that: "in order for digital currency to be accepted in the Islamic financial industry, it must have a measure of value, which has to be a monetary commodity (Ozиеv & Yandiev, 2017). Rosele et al. (2022) conclude that, crypto-currency falls under the category of *mutaqawwim* (Islamically recognised value), as long as it does not contravene the Shari'ah guidelines of *māl* (wealth).

Despite the fact that crypto-currency was developed and hugely inclined to in Western countries, with United States, leading the course, some of their business and financial figures viewed crypto-currency from a negative perspective (Auer & Claessens, 2018; Conlon et al., 2020; Hermans et al., 2022). For example, according to James Ledbetter, editor of Fintech Newsletter, Bitcoin "is a highly volatile, highly risky investment," and "if you look historically at the price of Bitcoin, there have been a number of occasions where it's really spiked and then comes crashing down really quickly." For instance, in 2017, after rallying to nearly \$20,000, Bitcoin's price collapsed and lost a third of its value in a single day, and in 2018, it dropped to as low as \$3,122, wiping out billions of dollars from the total crypto-currency market value. In Ledbetter words: "You have to at least be mentally

prepared and financially prepared that [a crash] could happen again. It could happen tomorrow.” Investors like Mark Cuban also liken Bitcoin to gambling and advise investing only as much money as one can afford to lose. Similarly, investors like Warren Buffet and Charlie Munger have made hostile comments against crypto-currency ([Macheel, 2022](#)).

For Buffet, crypto-currency is not a productive asset and it does not produce anything tangible, and as such, is invaluable; rather, “it’s got a magic to it and people have attached magic to lots of things.” Munger said that ([Aitken, 2022](#)):

“In my life, I try and avoid things that are stupid and evil and make me look bad in comparison to somebody else – and bitcoin does all three... It’s evil because it undermines the Federal Reserve System and third, it makes us look foolish compared to the Communist leader in China. He was smart enough to ban bitcoin in China.”

It is on record that, in July 2021, a widespread Twitter hack compromised many celebrity accounts including that of President Joe Biden, former President Barack Obama and Tesla CEO Elon Musk, in a bitcoin scam ([Frenkel et al., 2021](#)). As a result, hundreds of thousands of dollars in bitcoin was transferred under false pretences.

Numerous arguments have been established for and against crypto-currency, and the extent to which it could be allowed in Islamic economic system ([CNN Business, 2021](#); [Evans, 2015](#); [Khan, 2023](#); [Lawal, 2019](#); [Ozиеv & Yandiev, 2017](#); [Polas et al., 2020](#); [Rosele et al., 2022](#); [The Jakarta Post, 2021](#); [Yahoo! Finance, 2022](#)). The above reviewed literatures, views and insights are testimonies that there are multitudes of varying debates on the phenomenon of crypto-currency. Some are of the opinion that crypto-currency is an impermissible means of financial transaction, and of course, wealth acquisition, in Islam, while others opined that it could be accepted as a means of transaction, investment and wealth acquisition, if the impermissible clauses such as uncertainty, absence of governmental regulation; high

volatility and speculation etc., are removed. The fact that numerous Western investors are also sceptical about the nature and features of crypto-currency, gives support to the Islamic scholars and Islamic organisations that prohibit it in Islamic economics and finances. To this end, the following paragraphs shall be discussing how crypto-currency is used to acquire wealth, and how this aligns with Islam or not.

WEALTH ACQUISITION IN ISLAM AND POSITION OF CRYPTO-CURRENCY

Māl (wealth) has been defined as something that has value among the people, is exchangeable, and its benefits are permissible (Rosele et al., 2022). It is an accumulation of valuable economic resources that can be measured in terms of either real goods or money value (The Investopedia Team, 2022). Acquisition of wealth in Islam could be achieved through two broad categories regarded as “primary heads” and “secondary heads” (Muhammad et al., 2013). The primary heads include factors of production - Land, Labour, and Capital, and their respective rewards - rent, wage, and interest (profit). The primary heads could be done through *shirkah/mushārah* (sharing/mutual partnership), *qirāḍ/muḍārah* (dormant partnership) and any type of Islamic business transaction. The secondary heads also called redistribution or indirect access to wealth (Salim et al., 2016), involve non-participant beneficiaries in the process of production. The beneficiaries include orphans, widows, children, wayfarer, the poor, the needy etc., all of whom are expected to benefit from the wealth of the wealthy people. In this regard, several ways for wealth acquisition in Islam include *wasiyyah* (bequest), *mirāth* (inheritance), *hiba* (gift), *zakāt* (compulsory almsgiving), *ṣadaqah* (charity) and *waqf* (endowment) (Doi, 1998; Ibrahim & Mohd, 2017; Shah & Rashid, 2015).

This section places crypto-currency in Islamic economic system with a view to demonstrating the extent to which the latter could accommodate the former in relation to wealth acquisition. To do this, the following shall be discussed: the prohibitions identified in Islamic economic system; the Islamic prohibitions found in crypto-currencies; the features in crypto-currencies that are permitted in Islamic economic system; and the variants of crypto-currencies that are Shari'ah compliant.

Prohibitions Identified in Islamic Economic System

The prohibitions identified in Islamic economic system include: *gharar* (uncertainty); *ribā* (interest); gambling; price manipulation; sales of forbidden commodities (e.g. swine, intoxicants, idols); hoarding of goods/money; exploitation, fraud and deceit in business transaction (Doi, 1998; Al-Qaradawi, 1999; Qasmi, 2009; el-Jazaery, 2012). *Gharar* transaction is a kind of transaction in which uncertainty or speculative risk is involved. The Sunni legal schools including Hanafi, Hanbali and Shāfi' emphasised that *gharar* is "that whose nature and consequences are hidden" or "that which admits two possibilities, with the less desirable one being more likely" (Abbas, 2012, p. 70). *Ribā* is the interest in specific amounts of money or property. In Islam, all these prohibitions are regarded as evil means of acquiring wealth (Doi, 1998). As regards *ribā*, Allah says in Qur'an 2:275 that: "Those who devour usury will not stand except as the one whom the devil by his touch has driven to madness. That it because they say: Trade is like usury, but Allah has permitted trade and forbidden usury...." These prohibitions bother on the deep concern of Islam for the moral, social, and economic welfare of mankind (Al-Qaradawi, 1999).

Prohibitions found in Crypto-currencies

Many crypto-currencies have been found to contain elements that are prohibited in Islam. These include speculation; extreme volatility; uncertainty; highly risky; hoarding; absence of government control/regulation; lack of tangible assets and absence of intrinsic value; illegal activities (money laundry, terrorism) etc. Thus, many countries of the world, including Muslim dominated countries and Islamic financial institutions, groups, scholars, and jurists, have made crypto-currencies illegal. For example, Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI) gave the verdict that all forms of crypto-currency are forbidden in Islam, even though the Indonesian government allows it for trade, but not as legal tender.

Permitted Elements in Crypto-currencies

Despite the prohibitions found in crypto-currencies, there are legitimate uses for them. First, they contain store of value; unit of measure; and are used as means of exchange. In other words, crypto-currencies meet basic conditions of currency, although some deemed crypto-currency as a commodity or financial asset rather than currency (Paizin, 2021). The features of currency they possess allows for transaction and commercial activities (buying and selling). Based on this and the introduction of some Islamic economic features, some crypto-currencies are used in some Muslim dominated countries such as Malaysia, Iran, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi-Arabia, Dubai, Turkey etc.

Shari'ah Compliant Crypto-currencies compliant

There are some identified seemingly Shari'ah compliant crypto-currencies, including OneGram, NoorCoin, Bayan Token, ADAB, and Stellar. For example, OneGram crypto-currency (founded in 2017), backed by a gold asset, where each gram of gold represents one coin, thrives in Dubai, Malaysia, and currently accommodate about 1.8

billion people, who use the platform for business (Aliyu et al., 2020). One of the features of this form of crypto-currency is that, all its investors share from the profit accrued (Aliyu et al., 2020). It also employs the Know Your Customer/Client (KYC) concept in order to have background information of its investors, so as to deal with bad activities. It also employs the service of Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI), which provides the rules guiding crypto-currency (Aliyu et al., 2020). Thus, this makes the issue of uncertainty, speculation and volatility of the non-Shari'ah crypto-currency, absent. NoorCoin, which is said to be the first Shari'ah compliant token in the world, launched in 57 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries (Aliyu et al., 2020).

NoorCoin was awarded a Shari'ah certificate from World Shari'ah Advisory Committee, and the financial institution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have recommended the token to the Zakat Council of the Kingdom for possible consideration. It has been adjudged as a Shari'ah compliant crypto-currency based on the conditions that: there is no ribā in its issuance; loss and profit are shared as part of rewarding mechanism; there is lesser speculation because it is backed by an asset; employs the KYC strategy to have a background information of its investors so as to avoid unclean activities; and has the Gold Guard Company, which handles the gold storage and other gold matters (Aliyu et al., 2020). However, it has not been clearly considered as Shari'ah compliant because it is not clearly backed by a physical asset, which might make it open to uncertainty, speculation and volatility (Aliyu et al., 2020). An indication from this is that, not all acclaimed Shari'ah compliant crypto-currencies fulfil all the conditions of Islamic economic system.

Acquisition of Wealth with Sharī'ah Compliant Crypto-currencies

The operations of some Sharī'ah compliant crypto-currencies reveal that their users usually acquire wealth from them. For example, OneGram crypto-currency assigned 2.5% to charity donation and another 2.5% is allocated for miners' rewards. Also, as it could be seen in the OneGram crypto-currency, investors reinvest 70% of generated coins to purchase more gold, and they also share from the profit due. As [Aliyu et al. \(2020\)](#) notes: "This makes OneGram a distinctive crypto-currency and a reliable store of wealth whose worth increase continuously." Under the Bayan token, every investor has a specific privilege and entitlements, like discounted price when buying goods at certain designated stores/restaurants. This is *hibah* (gift) which the two heads (primary and secondary) of wealth acquisition in Islam are established.

As regards the primary heads which include land, labour and capital, the asset of investment which is gold could be regarded as land or capital, while the labour is done by the miners and those managing the crypto-currency, all of whom shares in the profit of the investment. It is in this connection that, one could agree with [Evans \(2015\)](#) that: "With regard to risk-sharing and cost sharing, crypto-currency operates according to *mushārah* (joint enterprise/partnership), in which 'miners' operate as general partners in loose confederation, who share the costs and benefits of maintaining the system."

OneGram and ADAB crypto-currencies also have provision for 2.5% deduction assigned to charity donation ([Aliyu et al., 2020](#)). This falls under the secondary head of wealth acquisition (e.g. *zakāt, ṣadaqah, hibah, waqf*). In fact, it has been established that Muslims use crypto-currencies for waqf, ṣadaqah, zakāt etc., even with the crypto-currencies that are not Sharī'ah compliant ([Paizin, 2021; Bintarto et al., 2022](#)). In other words, crypto-currencies have elements of wealth

acquisition through investment, business transaction, from which profits are made.

FINDINGS AND ASSESSMENT

It has been argued that crypto-currency is a developing phenomenon that cannot be repelled outright ([ar-Ruhayli, 2018](#)), in this technological age. In retrospect, the argument is that, for example, when fax machine first emerged, some scholars said that it was unlawful, but soon, it was considered lawful. Therefore, technological advancement cannot be a condition to nullify crypto-currency in an Islamic financial system. It is clear from the foregoing discussion that, crypto-currency has not been declared impermissible because of technological advancement, which sprang up a digital currency. Again, if one is to go by the definitions that wealth is “something that has value among the people, is exchangeable, and its benefits are permissible,” and “an accumulation of valuable economic resources that can be measured in terms of either real goods or money value,” one can argue that crypto-currency, largely fulfils these features of wealth. The point that benefits of wealth must be permissible, would be the real bottom line of the argument. This is because as earlier mentioned, “the rules of the Shari’ah prevent injustice in the acquisition and disposal of material resources in order to provide satisfaction to human beings and enable them to perform their obligations to Allah and the society.”

The crux of the matter, thus, is that, as it could be seen in the earlier submission, crypto-currencies are associated with market speculation, high volatility, high risk, uncertainty, absence of legal/government regulation, absence of intrinsic value, absence of tangible asset, unknown trading partners, unknown issuers etc. ([Houben & Snyers, 2018](#)), which could be used to exploit and defraud individuals and investors in crypto-currency transaction. All these

features crypto-currency is associated with, also makes it as an avenue for money laundering, purchase of arms and ammunition for terrorism, as well as evasion of taxes (NAN, 2021; Orji, 2022), all of which are antithetical to the spirit of Islamic economic system. This explains why crypto-currencies are banned in many countries such as China, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt etc. In addition, hoarding of asset is also a common feature in crypto-currency transaction. This is done by buying coins/asset at a lower price, then waiting for a long period as much as possible, and when the price rises, the coins/assets are sold at a higher price, to maximise profit (Personal communication with some investors in Bitcoin, 2021-2022).

It is worthy to note that, Islam permits all sorts of trades in as much they are in compliance with the principles of its economic system. Qur'ān 2:275 says: "... Allah has permitted trade, and forbidden usury...." It also says in Qur'ān 2: 188 that: "Do not devour one another's wealth by false and illegal means." In Qur'ān 4:29, Allah also says: "O you who believe, eat not each other's property by wrong means, but let there be amongst you trade and business through mutual good-will." This last quoted verse sets down a significant principle, which emphasises good-will in business transaction. The Qur'ānic words "the wrong methods (*bil-bātil*)" refer to those practices which are against Shari'ah and thus unlawful and immoral (Doi, 1998). Indeed, protection of wealth is one of the objectives of Shari'ah (Zarqa, 1980; Shah & Rashid, 2015). Therefore, for any crypto-currency to be in line with the means of acquisition of wealth in Islam, the elements of good-will and protection of wealth must be present. Considering the nature of high risk, uncertainty, volatility, and anonymity that crypto-currencies are associated with, the elements of good-will and wealth protection, are suspicious, and can hardly be assured. For example, if an investor dies, the process of acquisition of asset by his/her heirs have not been clearly established.

Yet, it is a fact that, crypto-currencies are used for other legal commercial transaction and investment, from which gains are made, and it is found that some Shari'ah compliant crypto-currencies have largely proven to accommodate the acquisition of wealth at both primary head and secondary head levels, without falling into things that are prohibited in Islamic financial and economic system. For instance, through OneGram crypto-currency, legal businesses and investments are done, and wealth is acquired. Wealth is also shared to other people in form of *sadaqah*, *waqf*, *zakāt*. It is however found that, aside crypto-currencies like OneGram and Rain, which are regulated by AAOIFI and the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) respectively, most crypto-currencies, including the acclaimed Islamic compliant ones, are not regulated by any authority, and are not backed by any tangible and physical asset. Thus, this makes them open to uncertainty, speculation, and volatility, all of which are forbidden in Islamic economic system, and means of wealth acquisition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings and implications of crypto-currency in the acquisition of wealth in Islam, the paper recommends the following:

- a. Adherence to the principle of *Halāl* and *Harām*: Humanity, particularly Muslims, should know and adhere to the principles of *halāl* and *harām*. One of it is that: "The prohibition of things is due to their impurity and harmfulness." Another one is: "What is *halāl* is sufficient, while what is *harām* is superfluous." Also, "Whatever is conducive to the haram is itself haram." Again, "Doubtful things are to be avoided." This aligns with the saying of the Prophet that:

The *halāl* is clear and the *harām* is clear. Between the two there are doubtful matters concerning which people do not know whether they are *halāl* or *harām*. One who avoid them to

- safeguard his religion and his honour is safe, while if some engages in a part of them, he may be doing something ḥarām.
- b. Exploration of Islamic provision on wealth acquisition: Islamic provision on wealth acquisition should be well and fully explored. Economic institutions like *waqf*, *zakāt* etc., have been established by plethora of research as viable and sustainable means of not only poverty alleviation, but also as avenue in which wealth could be acquired. It thus becomes the onus of every Islamic organisation and leader to make sure these institutions are maximally explored. These institutions could as well go beyond individuals and organisation endeavour to more national and international acceptability and practice.
 - c. Engaging in Islamic finance ventures: Wealthy Muslims should cultivate the habit of using their money to engage people in enterprising ventures, small and medium scale businesses. This could be in form of partnership such as *mushārah* and *mudārabah*. Also, instead of investing one's small money in a long-term crypto investment, speculating for a huge return, it is better and honourable to invest in a small-scale business. Non-interest loan, charity etc., could also help in the establishment of such business.
 - d. Promotion of technological advancement for shari'ah compliance crypto-currency: Since Islam supports development of any form, and encourages Muslims to make use of it, it becomes expedient for the Muslim community to embrace crypto-currency, since it is becoming the new normal, and gradually being accepted as a medium of exchange. This technology should however be designed to be Shari'ah compliant, to significantly accommodate Muslims, for the acquisition of wealth, and the distribution of it.
 - e. Adoption, regulation and monitoring of crypto-currency: Since one of the major challenges facing crypto-currency generally is that, most countries of the world are yet to consider it as a legal tender, and it also lacks government's regulation, yet it is spreading far and wide, globally, as a means of transaction, it is imperative that, it should be legally adopted, regulated and

monitored by government. After all, it has been argued that, it is a more appropriate medium of exchange in Islamic banking and finance than *ribā*-backed bank fiat currencies, as it is substantially liberated from interest rate (Evans, 2015).

- f. Incorporation of a shari'ah compliant window: Just like many conventional banking and financial systems operate what is called "Islamic banking" and operate Islamic provides for Islamic finances such as *sukūk* (Islamic bond) *murābaha* (cost-plus financing) *muḍārabah*, *mushārahah*, interest-free loan etc., Shari'ah compliant features could also be incorporated into crypto-currency.
- g. Fervent reminder and enlightenment: Islamic clerics, scholars and public lecturers should be fervent in bringing to their audience and followers the need to be cautious and conscious of crypto-currencies, especially those that are largely Western oriented (e.g. Bitcoin) and are inconsistent with the tenets of Islamic economic system, as an avenue for investment, business transaction and wealth acquisition, until they become regulated by a legal entity and government. Reminding the Muslims and enlightening them about the peculiarities and realities surrounding crypto-currencies would guide their economic life, and strengthen their relationship with the Supreme Owner of wealth, Allah. For Allah says in Qur'ān 51: 55 that: "And remind, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers."

CONCLUSION

The debates on the permissibility or otherwise of crypto-currency in Islamic economic and financial related issues are novel. Some crop of Islamic scholars and Islamic financial and legal bodies have given verdict on the extent of crypto-currency's permissibility in Islamic finances and economics, while others have concluded that, it is impermissible. Despite these two divided views, wealth is being acquired through crypto-currency, be it through investment, labour or redistribution of wealth (e.g. through *zakāt*, *waqf*). Many of the scholars that support the permissibility of crypto-currency in Islamic economic

system, however, stressed that, it must be used within the limit set by Islam. The conclusion that could be made, therefore, is that crypto-currency could be used to acquire wealth in an Islamic way, if it is designed to align with the legislation of Islam. It is therefore expedient that, this new technological advancement in the global financial sector should be further investigated to accommodate the teachings of Islam in matters of wealth acquisition, rather than outright forbiddance.

Yet, Muslims should be conscious of not falling into *ḥarām* while trying to be technologically advanced. What Islamic economic system enjoins is rules of morality upon man in his earnings, and it holds him responsible for the well-being of his fellowmen. It insists on the objective of setting up an economic order and transaction which enforce justice, stops exploitation, deceit, fraud, and sets a real welfare state (Doi, 1998). This is to hinder exploitative means of acquiring wealth, whereby wealth would be concentrated in the hands of few people, as it is becoming (Ahmad, 2010, p. 31), at the detriment of the larger portion of the society. It is believed that the incorporation of government's regulations, and the development and application of the Islamic economic and financial tenets, into crypto-currency, would make individual Muslims and investors to better appreciate and employ crypto-currency, for their financial and economic transactions, which include wealth acquisition and distribution. Thus, a window for *Shari'ah* compliant cryptocurrency, would make the global financial system, operated through crypto-currency, open to everyone, who are *Shari'ah* inclined.

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