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SHARAIH ISSUES IN THE APPLICATION OF REPURCHASE UNDERTAKING IN SUKUK MUDARABAH

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysia Sukuk market has grown quickly over the past two decades which makes it to become an integral part of the Malaysia capital market. It keeps embracing innovative structure, as underlined by the dispatch of Sukuk utilizing the ideas such as ijarah, salam, musharakah and mudarabah. The higher level of dynamism in the market as is reflected by the growth of sophisticated Sukuk arrangements that are now structured-based on numerous Shariah ideas to meet the needs of the customer (Sukuk holders). Owing to the foregoing, the objective of this paper is to show that there are few Shariah issues which require further discussion to guarantee compliance with Shariah (Islamic law). This paper discusses Shariah issues in Sukuk mudarabah and pays attention to the application of repurchase undertaking under Sukuk mudarabah structure using Malaysia as a case study. Methodology applied for this study is based on previous studies and literature related to the topic which were gathered from different published articles, reports and several sources. This paper recommends that Shariah scholars across the globe should converge for the purpose of harmonization of opinion to arrive at given standard for the operation of Islamic products unification globally.

Keywords: Sukuk, Mudarabah, Repurchase Undertaking, Shariah.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the important products in Islamic finance that has been attracting investors worldwide is Sukuk. Sukuk signifies one of the most important instruments of Islamic global market (COMCEC, 2018). Primarily, Sukuk was introduced to the market as an alternative to conventional bonds which serves same objective. It is an option for mobilization of fund for long-term saving and investment from numerous investors as conventional bonds. Without mincing-words, Sukuk is required to be Shariah-compliant. Many countries have embraced Sukuk for the growth of infrastructure and development. The United Arab Emirate (UAE); Malaysia; Bahrain; United Kingdom (UK); Qatar and United State (US) are countries that are in the forefront of *Sukuk* application in their infrastructure growth and development (AbdulKareem & Mahmud, 2019; Abdul Rahim, 2013; Abdelkafi & Bedoui, 2016). The active Sukuk market development is essential in providing funds for the government, corporate and private entities. Entering into Sukuk market permits a fundraising entity to reach a broader investor base. This, therefore, provides a larger funding amount at a competitive rate with government support as a result of tax incentive and other advantages for the Sukuk issuance (Abdul Rahim, 2013). On the side of the *Sukuk* structure, the global *Sukuk* market has continued to embrace new innovative in *Sukuk*, launching of various products of *Sukuk*. The most widely Sukuk structures in the market are ijarah Sukuk, Murabaha Sukuk, istisna Sukuk, mudarabah Sukuk, Sukuk salam and Sukuk musharakah (Ahmed, Islam & Alabdullah, 2014).

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According to Erkan and Altinay (2019), Sukuk has been recognized as the greatest Islamic finance product engaged in the global market. More-so, it accrues more funds across borders than what is obtainable in the local markets. In view of the above, many countries are enjoined to embrace Sukuk for their development and growth programmes. These countries after embracing Sukuk can possibly extend the Islamic finance functions by given it a universal development. Sukuk investment requires a fixed return with less risk and it should be Shariahcompliant. In addition, Sukuk ought to be issued for new industrial projects. If Sukuk is issued for businesses, it must be certified that the holders have complete ownership in real assets (Ahmed, Islam, & Alabdullah, 2014). Sukuk are financial tools that are utilized for raising funds and they are to be considered as tools for resource mobilization for both public and private segment. Even though the improvement of *Sukuk* market is a significant achievement, some structures were attempted to act and achieve the same economic objective as conventional bonds which compromise Shariah principles (IFN, 2016; Mohd, Hafizi & Shahida, 2010). Therefore, this paper sheds light on Shariah issues that have been raised in *Sukuk* structure especially with regards to the application of repurchase undertaking under *Sukuk* mudarabah. Notwithstanding, this paper focuses only on Malaysia's Sukuk structure and would not make comparison with *Sukuk* structures in other countries. The analysis of the above Shariah issues also refer to the Principal Term and Conditions of Sunway Treasury Sukuk which is already offered in Malaysia market.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology utilized in this study is qualitative approach in attempting to explores Shariah issues in application of repurchase undertaking in *Sukuk mudarabah* in line with the objective of this research. This research paper focuses on review of previous literature on the concept of Shariah issues governing the application of *Sukuk mudarabah*. The study gathered information from different published articles, reports and several sources that have discussed intensively the concept of *Sukuk mudarabah* and criticism against the application of repurchase undertaking arrangement.

3. THE CONCEPT OF SUKUK

At the inception of *Sukuk* into the market, *Sukuk* was often referred to as Islamic bonds. The term, Islamic bond gives the notion that *Sukuk* is synonymous to conventional bonds. However, the structures are unlike bonds but the structure of *Sukuk* requires to be Shariah-compliant with underlying assets. At the moment, the term *Sukuk* is not associated with the bond but it is Shariah-compliant financial certificate. Historically, *Sukuk* can be traced back to the period of Second Caliph Muslim, Umar bin Al-Khattab (May Allah bless him). During his lifetime, the selling of *Sukuk* was reported during the reign of Caliph Marwan bin Al-Hakam which was mentioned in Al-Mawatta, a famous book authored by Imam Malik (Abdul Rahim, 2013; ISAR, 2017; Zulkhibri, 2015). To buttress further, *Sukuk* originated from word of (حسكوك) and its plural form is ($-\omega - \omega$) which means "Certificate, Islamic Investment Certificate and Legal Instrument". *Sukuk* is a form of conventional bonds that depend on profit and loss sharing among investors instead of giving a stable return to its investors (ISRA, 2017; Onagun, 2016).

The concept of *Sukuk* has been viewed differently by Islamic financial institutions (IFIs) and Islamic authorities. To attest to this, the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) defines *Sukuk* as "certificates of equal value representing undivided shares in ownership of tangible assets, usufruct and services or; of the assets of a particular project or specific investment activity" (AAOIFI, 2018; p. 468). In its own view, The Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) defines *Sukuk* as "Certificates that represent

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proportional undivided ownership right intangible assets, or a pool of tangible assets and other types of assets. These assets could be in a specific project or specific investment activity that is Shariah-compliant" (IFSB, 2018; p. 1).

In addition to the aforementioned, the Securities Commission Malaysia (SCM) in its own definition of *Sukuk* posited it as a "financial document or certificate which represents the value of an asset evidencing an undivided pro-rata ownership of an underlying asset" (Ahmad & Abd Rahim, 2013, p.87). On the final note in presenting the definition of *Sukuk*, The International Islamic Financial Market (IIFM) has it that "*Sukuk* is an investment certificates of equal value representing undivided shares in ownership of tangible assets, usufructs and services or (in the ownership of) the assets of particular projects or special investment activity" (IIFM, 2015; p.4). To further elaborate on the concept of *Sukuk*, it enjoys the benefit of backing by the underlying asset, thereby providing for the investors or *Sukuk* holders certain protection which may not be available in conventional bonds (Dusuki, 2010). Although a general starting point in differentiating bond and *Sukuk* is to clarify Shariah perspective, it is obviously comprehended that *Sukuk* is in tandem with Shariah laws, however conventional bond is unquestionably an interest-based (riba) in nature, owing to the fixed interest accrued to it (Ahmad, Ripain, Bahari, & Shahar, 2015).

Table 1.1 Essential Differences between Dond and Sukuk	
Bonds	Sukuk
Bonds represent a debt obligation.	Sukuk represents ownership of Sukuk asset.
The underlying asset of bonds may not comply with	The underlying asset of <i>Sukuk</i> is compliant with the
the principle of Shariah.	principle of Shariah.
Pricing of the bond is based on credit rating.	Pricing of <i>Sukuk</i> is rated in accordance with the value of the underlying asset that backs it.
The profits accrued from bonds correspond to fixed interest making it riba.	Profit of <i>Sukuk</i> can increase in value when the underlying asset of <i>Sukuk</i> increases in value.
Selling of bonds is the sale of debt.	Selling of <i>Sukuk</i> is selling the ownership of an underlying asset that backs the <i>Sukuk</i> .

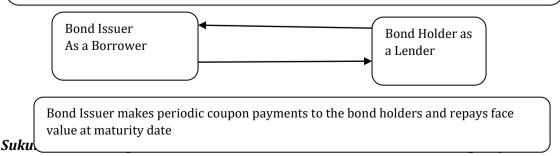
Table 1.1 Essential Differences between Bond and Sukuk

Source: ISRA, (2017), Ahmad, et al (2015).

Figure 1.1. Diagrammatically Presentation of the Relationship between *Sukuk*/bonds Issuer and the *Sukuk*/bondholders.

Bond: Lending Relationship

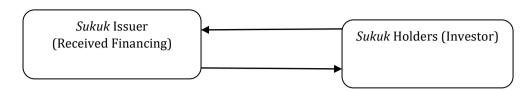
Bond Issuer: This party issues bonds to raise financing, while other party known as Bond holder pays face value and receives a bond certificate to the tune of bond purchased. The relationship between bond issuer and bond holders is that debtors and creditor.



Partnership

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ISRA (2017).

Figure 1.1 above presents the major differences in the relationship between the bondholder and the bond issuer as compared with *Sukuk* itself. It further reveals that bonds utilize a contract of loan to establish indebtedness between bondholder and bond issuer while *Sukuk* contain a category of contracts to create financial obligations between *Sukuk* holders and *Sukuk* issuer.

3.1. THE SUKUK CLASSIFICATIONS

Sukuk can be categorized based on the underlying assets of contractual structures. All *Sukuk* represents a form of equity as they provide certificates of ownership of an asset or a pool of assets or claim cash flows to *Sukuk* holders. In practical term, *Sukuk* are categorised according to their risk and reward-related to the structure and profit; therefore, they are categorized into debt-based, lease-based, partnership-based, hybrid-based (which contain both equity and debt) and agency *Sukuk*. The total of *Sukuk* structures so far has reached 14 types, as recorded by AAOIFI (2003) Shariah standard 17 (ISRA, 2017, Safari, 2013). The purpose of this paper is not to elaborate in detail on every class of *Sukuk*, its structure and Shariah principle application. Rather, the key objective of this paper is to elaborate and discuss Shariah issues under *Sukuk mudarabah* in Malaysia context.

Sukuk mudarabah played an important role in domestic *Sukuk* where it ranked as the second largest *Sukuk* that has been structured around the world. *Sukuk mudarabah* is equity based *Sukuk* where profits and losses were shared between contractual parties. Moreover, investment from a Shariah perspective does not permit a fixed return as well as assurance principal amount invested at maturity date to the *Sukuk* holders. Also, in the matter of repurchase undertaking, as far as Shariah issue is concerned discussions about application of repurchase undertaking between *Sukuk* issuer and *Sukuk* holders are ongoing. Having presented the above, the next segment discusses the detail clarification of *Sukuk mudarabah* structure.

4. Sukuk Mudarabah

Sukuk mudarabah refers to the certificate in which one of the partners as an entrepreneur is assigned to managing the activities or operation of *Sukuk*. The agreement entered into when it comes to *Sukuk mudarabah* which occurs between the two parties. One of the two parties will provide the capital (*Rab-al mal*), while the other serves as an entrepreneur is referred to as (*mudarib*) who works with the laid down condition to ensure that the benefits ought to be shared between the two parties based on a predetermined ratio. The entrepreneur (*mudarib*) is the certificate issuer. The subscribers are the capital providers and the realised funds are the *mudarabah* principal. The certificate holder will hold a mudarabah asset (Sapuan, 2016). Also, it is agreed that, if any, the share of losses and profits are borne by the capital provider only. In addition, the *Sukuk* holder as the owner of *Sukuk mudarabah* has the right to get his/her capital. A yearly percentage of the profits realised are given to the entrepreneur based on the agreement stipulated in the contract (Biancone & Shakhatreh, 2015;).

Furthermore, *Sukuk mudarabah* represents the most common ownership and entitle their holders for shares in a certain project for which the *Sukuk* have been issued to finance. Also, the *Sukuk* holder is qualified for all rights, which have been described by Shariah upon his





ownership for *mudarabah Sukuk* in matters of the mortgage, sale, succession, gift and others (Kamil, Abdullah, Shahimi, & Ismail, 2010). To elucidate further, *Sukuk mudarabah* is an investment *Sukuk* that represents common ownership of a unit or equivalent value in the *mudarabah* equity. Therefore, in any *Sukuk* financed project, owners are qualified to hold a share. Also, there exists a right for *Sukuk* holders to exchange the ownership of an asset by an offer for sale or trading in the security market at the point when the predefined period of expiration of the subscription (ISRA, 2011; Lahsasna, Hassan & Ahmad, 2018).

Safian (2017) stated that *mudarabah* is profit and loss sharing idea which is regarded as a legitimate alternative for Muslim customers as both the customer and Islamic finance institutions work together as a partner. He stressed further that a party would contribute the capital while the other party utilizes that capital to make a profit. The profit earned from the venture is divided between the customer and the Islamic finance institution. This idea is unanimously satisfactory by all Muslim scholars and henceforth it becomes the most common Islamic financial product.

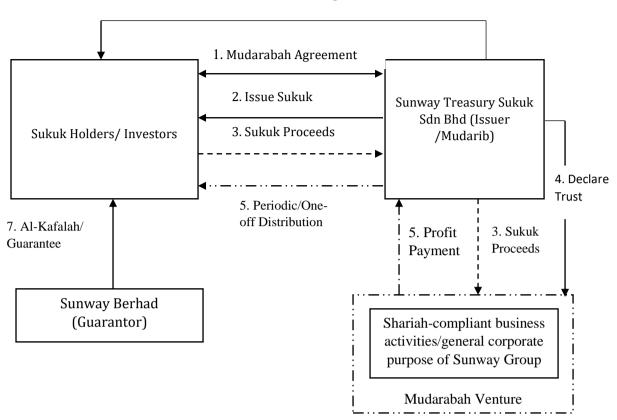
More so, the SCM (2004) defines *Sukuk mudarabah* as:

"A contract which is made between two parties to finance a business venture. The parties are a rabbi al-mal or an investor who solely provides the capital and a mudharib or an entrepreneur who solely manages the project. If the venture is profitable, the profit will be distributed based on a pre-agreed ratio. In the event of a business loss, the loss shall be borne solely by the provider of the capital" (SCM, 2004, p. 3).

Furthermore, AAOIFI categorized *mudarabah Sukuk* as a certificate that represents ownership of units of equal value in *mudarabah* equity and registered in the names of *Sukuk* holders based on undivided ownership of shares in *mudarabah* equity and its profits is shared according to the percentage of ownership. This type of *Sukuk* gives its owner the privilege to get his capital at the time *Sukuk* are redeemed and a yearly portion of the realized profits as acknowledged in the issuance book (ISRA, 2011; Yusoff, Kamdari & Malik, 2016). In spite of fact that Sukuk *mudarabah* is a partnership contract that is proof by the issuance of certificates, an investor does not enjoy same benefit and rights as equity holders do, as the former is just qualified for a benefit share. More so, they cannot participate in the meeting and allow to cast vote at the annual general meeting. The capital contributed can be either in cash or kind. If the capital contributed is in kind, it ought to be valued in monetary terms at the time of entering into the contract. The investor is not allowed to utilize debt claimed by time as his capital contribution. Sukuk mudarabah has been utilized and commonly recognized in the capital market for quite a while due to its straightforwardness which makes it friendly to both issuers and investors, especially those issuers without an asset base can be readily utilized as an underlying *Sukuk* asset (ISRA, 2017; Safari, Ariff, & Mohamad, 2014; SA'AD, 2018). Thus, Figure 1.2 below shows the structure of the Sukuk mudarabah.

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6. Purchase Undertaking

Figure 1.2 Sunway *Sukuk Mudarabah* structure Source: Uddin, Sultan, Hosen & Ullah (2015).

Steps involved in Sunway Sukuk structure.

- 1- Setting up a *mudarabah* venture, issuer shall invite *Sukuk* holders to participate in *mudarabah* venture. Under this venture, the issuer shall be the entrepreneur (*mudarib*) whereas *Sukuk* holders shall be the capital provider (*rabul al-mal*).
- 2- The issuer shall issue *Sukuk mudarabah* to the *Sukuk* holders.
- 3- Proceeds from *Sukuk mudarabah* represent 100% of *Sukuk* holder's capital contributed to the venture.
- 4- Issuer shall subsequently make a declaration of trust ("Declaration of Trust") over the undivided rights and entitlement of *Sukuk* holders under the *mudarabah* venture ("Trust Assets") for the benefit of the *Sukuk* holders. The *Sukuk mudarabah* hence represents each of the *Sukuk* holders undivided beneficial interests in the *mudarabah* venture.
- 5- Profit generated from the *mudarabah* project will be shared and distributed between capital provider and entrepreneur according to a pre-agreed sharing ratio (PSR) of 99:1, while losses will be borne solely by capital provider. In respect of *Sukuk mudarabah* with periodic distributions, the payment of profit shall be distributed semi-annually or such other period to be agreed ("Periodic Distribution (s)") to the *Sukuk* holders. In respect of *Sukuk mudarabah* without Periodic Distribution(s), the payment of profit shall be distributed to the *Sukuk* holders on a one-off basis (the "One-off Distribution") on the respective maturity dates of such *Sukuk mudarabah*.
- 6- Issuer shall undertake to purchase the Trust Assets from the Trustee (who acting on behalf of *Sukuk* holders via a purchase undertaking upon occurrence of the earlier of the respective maturity dates of *Sukuk mudarabah* or declaration of a Dissolution Event or on Early Redemption.

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7- Sunway Berhad (as "Guarantor") shall guarantee the obligation of issuer under the purchase undertaking. The guarantor shall enter into a separate *Kafalah* Agreement with the issuer to provide the guarantee, which is an independent arrangement from *mudarabah* agreement (Uddin *et al.*, 2015).

4.1. CRITICSM AGAINST REPURCHASE UNDERTAKING IN SUKUK MUDARABAH

Repurchase undertaking is a promise or agreement made between the two parties involved i.e. (the issuer and the *Sukuk* holders) to buy the underlying asset of *Sukuk*. However, this repurchase undertaking has been criticised by some Islamic Shariah scholars. Some of the complaints against the *Sukuk* mudarabah are the issue of its repurchase undertaking. Utilizing repurchase undertaking might be viewed as an element of capital guarantee. The issuer makes the obligation to purchase an underlying asset of *Sukuk* holders in the project at the same price to the capital invested by the *Sukuk* holder. Contrarily, this practice has been viewed as controversial given that repurchase undertaking practice is like a guarantee of the capital invested by the *Sukuk* holders which is not permitted in Shariah bearing in mind the nature of this contract (Van Wijnbergen, & Zaheer 2013; Zakaria & Aziz, 2013).

Nevertheless, taking practice of *Sukuk* in Malaysia as an example considering the issues that require clarification, it is worth to mention that most of the *Sukuk* issued in Malaysia must firstly get approved by Shariah Advisory Council (SAC) and SCM before the public offer is made. Though, authors are not condemning those *Sukuk* issued in the country positing that it does not go in line with Shariah principle but there are still critical areas where Islamic scholars have divergence opinions.

Dusuki (2010) stated that repurchase undertaking is another formula whereby the issuer will make a promise that in the event of default or maturity such will repurchase the underlying asset of *Sukuk* back from *Sukuk* holders at a face value irrespective of whether the asset value exceeds face value or not. For instance, if the *Sukuk* was issued at RM700 million and the profit expected was 5% each year with five years of maturity. At the end of fifth years maturity, the issuer will repurchase the underlying asset of *Sukuk* back from *Sukuk* holder at the original price of (RM700 million) plus 5% return. Dusuki (2010) further observes that utilizing the strategy of repurchase undertaking in *Sukuk* structure resembles the features of conventional bonds which does not conform with the objective of Shariah. This in line with AAOIFI declaration that it is improper for the mudarib to commit to repurchase asset at face value unless in the case of mudarib negligence or breach of contract condition thus makes it a permissible. The alternative is that repurchase must be undertaken at market value or agreed with price at the time of re-purchase by the issuer (Elmalki & Dennis, 2010).

In his own view, Dusuki and Mokhtar (2010), examined that purchase undertaking issue in asset-based *Sukuk* is an assurance of capital plus unpaid profit for the *Sukuk* holder. He further postulated that when promise considered an independent element in *Sukuk*, at this point it fulfils the Shariah prerequisites. *Sukuk mudarabah* is based on a structure where profits and losses are shared between investors and issuers. Furthermore, this investment from the Shariah perspective does not permit a fixed return as well as the guarantee of the capital at the maturity of the investment, thus the periodic returns were always fixed. Also, in the case whereby the expected return realized is less than what is expected, the issuer will provide fund, whereas when the expected profit exceed what is expected, therefore the issuer would take it as an incentive. All these characteristics look against the concepts and nature of *mudarabah* where losses were to be borne by the issuer (Razak, Saiti & Dinc, 2019).



In Malaysia context, it is acceptable to undertake repurchase of an underlying asset of *Sukuk* from Sukuk holders or whoever holds it at nominal value. This is based on Sukuk mudarabah which is issued in the country with repurchase undertaking are being at nominal value (Saripudin, Mohamad, Razif, Abdullah, & Rahman, 2012). Arguably, Malaysia position on the repurchase undertaking revealed that in Sukuk transaction, a purchase undertaking is a guarantee made by the issuer or originator to repurchase the asset upon the maturity date or upon any default event. The objective is to give a greater score in credit ratings so that the investors will be sure to invest because of that guarantee. It further suffices that the investors will not be reluctant to invest their capital due to the fact that they will realize their invested sum back at the maturity date by the purchase undertaking through either issuer or originator. The purchase undertaking is an essential rating factor in *Sukuk* transaction as it changes the risk associated with the transaction and fundamental shifts the credit risk driver to the entity providing the undertaking (Saiti, Wahab, & Ahmad, 2017; Saripudin at el., 2012). However, it is not acceptable for the mudarib to repurchase the underlying asset of *Sukuk* from *Sukuk* holders or whoever holds it at the nominal value at the end of maturity. Contrary to the Malaysia view stated above, another school of thought has it that, to be acceptable to undertake the underlying asset of *Sukuk* at fair value, net value, market value or price that is agreed by both parties at time of actual purchase, in accordance with AAOIFI Shariah standard (Dhiraj, Nazarov, Ahmat, & Arif, 2019; Radzi., 2018).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the above discussion, one can summarize that despite the development and growth of Sukuk market worldwide, there is no doubt that there are still controversial issues that require quick resolution in order to sustain growth and development of *Sukuk* market industry. There is a need for cooperation among Shariah scholars and Islamic financial experts; more so discussion and interaction among Shariah boards on either side is sought. This is essential to certify that Islamic finance products will be internationally accepted by not only Muslim countries but also by non-Muslim countries. This will also make Malaysia the hub for Islamic finance in the world for many years a reality. In addition, it is observed that from different schools of thought, educational background, culture and environment in areas Shariah scholar operate and legal/authority requirement in different jurisdiction create divergent opinions among Shariah scholars in one Shariah issue. In addition, it also makes it difficult for investors and public to differentiate *Sukuk* and conventional bonds in the market. This creates a negative effect on the growth of *Sukuk* worldwide. We additionally observed that there are opportunities when there is convergence of these opinions among Shariah scholars, harmonization of Islamic finance products and services if all Islamic countries can create a unified global international Shariah advisory council to set up international basic requirements for Islamic finance in their respective countries/state level, create international researchers and development centre in the field of Islamic finance which would educate and serves as training ground for Islamic bankers. REFRENCES

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