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Gaining recognition of Islamic spiritual intelligence for organisational sustainability
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Gaining Recognition of Islamic Spiritual Intelligence for Organisational Sustainability

Introduction

The last two decades has seen an upsurge in the employee unethical practices in global organisations leading to the collapse of these organisations (Pearce et al., 2013; Schwartz, 2013; Stevens & Rago, 2013). Media and news reports have highlighted numerous cases of employee ethical misconduct such as dishonesty, bribery, and cheating (Chapman & Lindner, 2016; Schwartz et al., 2005) that have undermined organisational sustainability. This high level of ethical misconduct questions the efficacy of existing ethical programs. It emphasises the importance of organisational sustainability and its social and economic impact on organisations (Lange et al., 2012; Pearce et al., 2013; Soltani, 2014).

Since the last decade, organisational sustainability has emerged as a discipline, and debate on its indicators and measures has attracted the attention of researchers (Özlem & Besler, 2014). Globally, a significant number of big companies such as Enron Corporation, WorldCom, Arthur & Anderson collapsed mainly due to the lack of ethical practices among their employees (Chernov & Sornette, 2016; Stevens, 2013). These organisations suffered from low efficiency, revenue losses and bankruptcy (Arshad, 2017; Nielsen, 2010). Thus, it can be argued that the ethical lapse of a single employee may result in financial and moral damage to the entire organisation though most of the large organisations have formal codes of ethics (Weber & Wasieleski, 2013). Moreover, they also offer ethical training to their employees. Nevertheless, these programs have proven largely ineffective with unethical employee practices remaining prevalent in the organisations. This is a serious concern for organisational sustainability. In

addition, employees are spiritually weak and require spiritual training to increase their awareness concerning right and wrong actions.

Organisational Sustainability

Sustainability is considered a multi-level construct, comprising individual, organisational, political-economic, social-cultural, and ecological levels. Most academics and practitioners examine how executives respond to the challenge of sustainability and survival of the organisations (Martínez et al., 2014). Sustainability is a term that has been utilised and interpreted in substantially different ways (Akhtar et al., 2015). Probably the most common use of the term sustainability, however, is in relation to sustainable development (Sikdar, 2003). According to Wilkinson et al. (2001), sustainability mainly refers to maintaining or renewing something specific. The challenge of how to become a sustainable organisation is a topic of considerable interest in the business sector, with studies linking improved performance to cultural factors surrounding sustainability (Perkins et al., 2012). Pearce et al. (2013) indicated that sustainability as organisational approaches aimed at achieving a balance between short-term organisational goals and long-term enterprise and social responsibility.
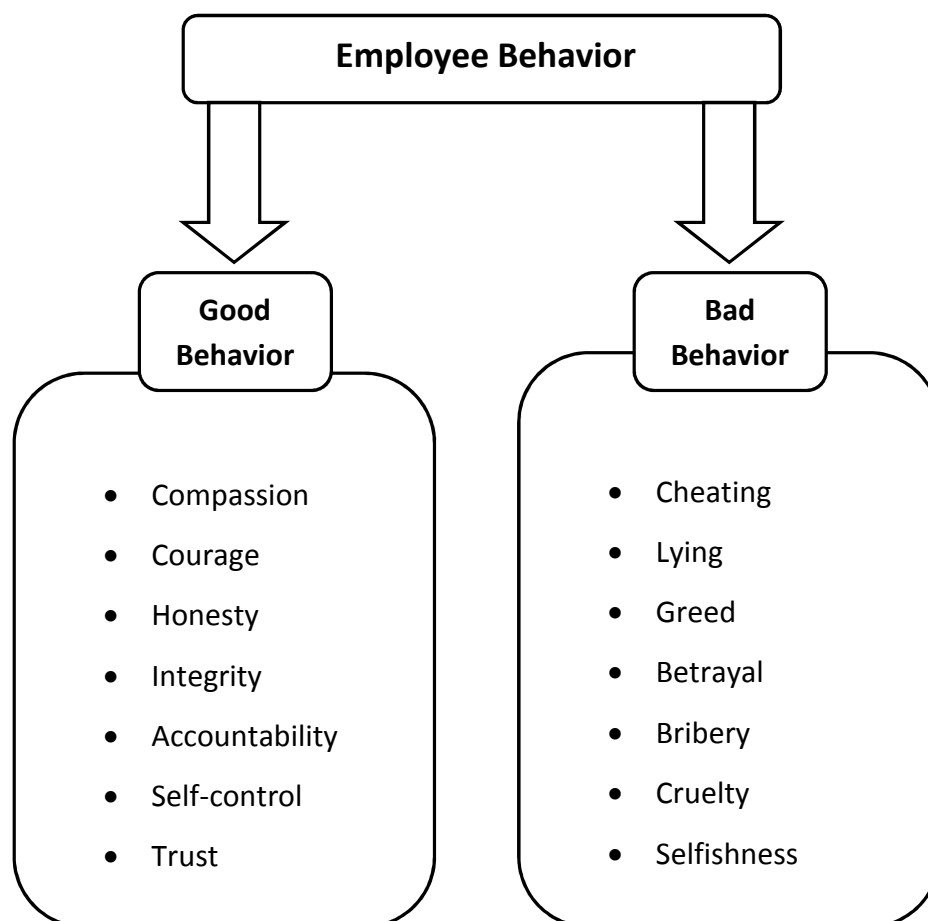
In business, sustainability means managing human and natural capital with the same vigour we apply to the management of financial capital (White, 2005). Additionally, Wilson (2003) pointed out that while organisational sustainability recognises that organisational growth and profitability are important, it goes beyond the profit maximisation model and requires from organisations to pursue social, environmental and economic goals related to organisational sustainability. Specifically, Hart and Milstein (2003) proposed that organisational sustainability as the capability of an organisation to contribute to 'sustainable development delivering

simultaneously economic, social, and environmental benefits the so-called 'triple bottom line'. It is a balanced organisational approach that considers economic, environmental, and social dimensions in holistic and enduring ways. Hubbard (2009) claimed that organisational sustainability is associated with the economic performance, growth, and long-term profitability of organisations. Other works have considered organisational sustainability to be more related to operations and employee unethical practices within organisations. Organisational sustainability is about understanding and managing the resources which we use in business. Employees are in fact an organisation's most important resource, yet they are often overlooked when we talk about sustainability (Moore, 2008). Thus, our focus is the lack of a social system approach to sustainability, including a commitment to ethical employees for organisations (Dubois & Dubois, 2012).

Linking Employee Behaviour and Organisational Sustainability Organisational sustainability is now a priority for many organisations, in keeping with the public interest in organisational performance beyond economic outcomes (Savitz, 2012). Numerous studies have found that employees are playing central roles in modelling and promoting ethical and responsible behaviour in their organisations rendering human development one of the most important strategies for promoting organisational sustainability (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Furthermore, it is assumed that the success of change efforts aimed at developing more responsible cultures is heavily dependent on organisations' ability to develop new competencies and mindsets among their employees and executives (Rimanoczy & Pearson, 2010). The link between employee ethical behaviour and an organisation's 'economic sustainability' has received considerable research attention with a wide range of employee ethical conduct identified as a high-

performance factor for organisational sustainability (Cacioppe et al., 2008). Employees' personal values have been related to attitudes towards sustainable business practices, ethical decision-making and the adoption and implementation of socially responsible policies (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004). Thus, the adoption and successful implementation of high-performance employee ethical practices that contribute to organisational sustainability depend on employees' ethical behaviour. Figure 1 is shown employee behaviour.

Figure 1: Employee behavior Comparison

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                    │      Employee Behavior      │
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                  ┌──────────┐        ┌──────────┐
                  │   Good   │        │   Bad    │
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              ┌──────────────────┐ ┌──────────────────┐
              │  • Compassion    │ │  • Cheating      │
              │  • Courage       │ │  • Lying         │
              │  • Honesty       │ │  • Greed         │
              │  • Integrity     │ │  • Betrayal      │
              │  • Accountability│ │  • Bribery       │
              │  • Self-control  │ │  • Cruelty       │
              │  • Trust         │ │  • Selfishness   │
              └──────────────────┘ └──────────────────┘
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Source: The Author, 2017

Islamic Spiritual Intelligence

Islamic spiritual intelligence is intelligible with the individual's internal strength of having a pure heart. A person with a pure heart has the strong aspiration to act in such a way that it will be beneficial for them and others (Rahman & Shah, 2015). However, the importance of the heart has been mentioned by Bukhari and Muslim as stated by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH):

"*Whereby in Adam's body contained a piece of meat in a physical form that in fact refers to the pure heart. If the heart is good, the whole body will be good, and if the heart is bad, the whole body will be bad as well*" (Bukhari, 1987).

Allah has created us, and we are reasonable to dedicate to Him our utmost devotion. This means that by having a high spiritual intelligence, one could control his or her emotions well and later influence good thinking towards certain individuals, work and situations.
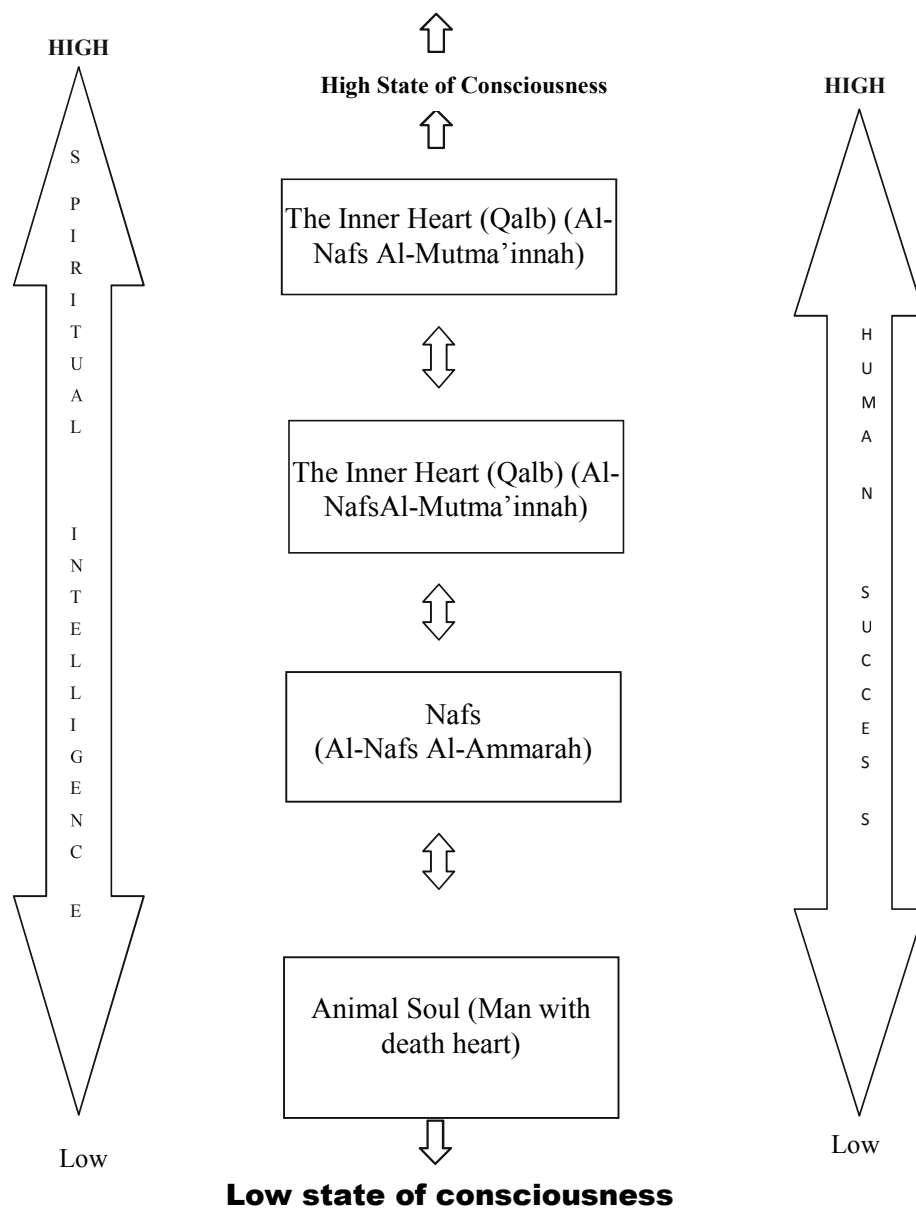
Muslim scholars have studied Islamic spiritual intelligence and its components. However, uniform components of Islamic spiritual intelligence are not found because every researcher built themes based on the needs of their research. Most of them associated spiritual intelligence with the closeness of oneself to God. Islamic spiritual intelligence is concluded as one's ability to achieve the level of excellence in his relationship with God as well as fellow human beings and nature by doing good and preventing evil (Tischler et al., 2002). This kind of intelligence can be achieved through true faith, sincere worship, obedience and adherence to performing worship, noble behaviour and avoiding evil and shameful deeds (Hanefar et al., 2015). To become an excellent employee or to be a successful individual, one has to focus on the teachings of Islam. To be specific, the qualities of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), which are the *Sidq* (truthful), *Amanah* (trustful), *Tabligh* (spreading faith/advocacy) and *Fatanah* (wisdom), can become the foundation for a balanced spiritual intelligence (Bukhari, 1987).

In Islam, the soul is purified through the remembrance of God (*dhikr* [remembrance], *fikr* [contemplation] and pious actions). By remembering God, they will be able to pacify the devil within and fight against worldly passions and temptations (Nakamura, 1971). In dealing with human character, there are two approaches to ethics, namely virtue ethics and action ethics. In virtue ethics, consideration is given to the moral agent, one's character and dispositions instead of one's actions (Salleh et al., 2012). Virtue ethics include ethics as a way of life dealing with purifying the soul to develop and improve man's character. This self-introspection approach is the very nature of virtue ethics (Ali & Owaihan, 2008). Therefore, virtue or spiritual ethics, known as the science of the soul deals with self-knowledge, the inner dimension of the human being for the purpose of human character development (Ahmed et al., 2016).

Al-Ghazali in his book *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Al-Ghazali, 2015) clearly mentioned that knowledge of the soul is the path to the knowledge of God, creating consciousness of God. He outlined four basic aspects of the soul; heart (*qalb*), spirit (*ruh*), soul (*nafs*) and intellect (*'aql*). There are two definitions of heart (*qalb*). First, it is a piece of blood in the left breast. The second definition is, it is an immaterial thing or formless element which is connected to the heart. It received the knowledge of God and the spiritual world (Al-Ghazali, 2015). People with high spiritual intelligence will have a high level of consciousness about their own creation and possess a high ability to understand and gain the knowledge of the heart and soul (Al-Ghazal et al., 2015). When individuals have the knowledge of the heart and soul, they can gain the knowledge of God and His attributes. Figure 2 illustrates the knowledge of God and His attributes.

Figure 2: Spiritual intelligence and Human Success

Knowledge of God and His attributes

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High State of Consciousness

⇧

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HIGH

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The Inner Heart (Qalb) (Al-Nafs Al-Mutma'innah)

⇕

The Inner Heart (Qalb) (Al-NafsAl-Mutma'innah)

⇕

Nafs
(Al-Nafs Al-Ammarah)

⇕

Animal Soul (Man with death heart)

⇩

Low

Low

Low state of consciousness

Source: Hanefar, Sa'ari and Siraj (2016)

Islamic Spiritual Intelligence for Organisational Sustainability

The Islamic perspective of spiritual intelligence, human attributes or potentials is conceded based on the nature of God the Almighty which are the 99 names of God known as *al-Asma' al-Husna*. The ability to develop God's attributes within oneself will lead to a high level of spiritual intelligence in human beings (Ghazali, 1992). In the Islamic perspective, both employees and

employers must depend on God for the outcome of any action. God asked His believers to depend on Him. God says, "When you have made a decision, put your trust in God. Certainly, God loves those who put their trust (in Him)". In Islam, Muslims should be honest and truthful, internally and externally, privately and publicly, whether observed by other people or not, whether he acts or speaks (Ryan, 2000). The Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said:

"Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man continued to tell the truth until he becomes a truthful person. Falsehood leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Hell, and a man may continue to tell lies till he is written before Allah, a liar" (Bukhari, 1987).

Islam instructs the Muslim to be honest in dealings with the organisation. That will lead to the happiness of both the individual and organisation. According to Islam, every human being will be made responsible for his good or bad deeds and accordingly will be rewarded or punished. God says:

"Whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant) shall see it. And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant) shall see it" (Al-Quran, 99:7-8).

In many of today's organisations, people are only mentally and physically present, while their souls are absent from the organisation (Mitroff, 2003). The consequence is that organisations do not trigger the full creativity and potential of their employees (Hoque et al., 2013). Employees, in turn, do not succeed in developing themselves as holistic human beings

(Rego et al., 2008). Both the employees and employers in an Islamic organisation should work with absolute sincerity for the blessings of God as well as for the betterment of the organisation.

In the present situation, organisations are suffering from the unethical behaviour, irresponsible decision making and serious misconduct of their employees which contributed to a great loss of the organisations' income. These problems are strongly related to the issues of employees spiritual intelligence disparity, and an employee's positive behaviour will have a significant impact on organisational sustainability.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper deliberates the unavoidable role of Islamic spiritual intelligence for organisational sustainability as employees are considered the most valuable asset to their organisation (Mahmood et al., 2015). This resource is under threat as employees confront behavioural problems due to a lack of spirituality which can be detrimental to organisational sustainability. Therefore, appropriate training programs and activities performed by the organisation in line with the Islamic spiritual intelligence are predicted to be the best solution to the said phenomenon.

The paper proposed that Islamic spiritual intelligence is intelligible with the individual's internal strength of having a pure heart. A person with a pure heart has a strong aspiration to act in such a way that it will be beneficial for them and others (Rahman & Shah, 2015). The importance of the heart has been mentioned by Bukhari and Muslim as been stated by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH): Allah has created us, and we must express our utmost devotion to Him. This means that by having high spiritual intelligence, one could control his or her emotions well and later influence good thinking towards certain individuals, works and situations. Also, Islamic

spiritual intelligence develops spiritual awareness in the employees that makes them more effective in the organisations. Thus, employee positive behaviour will have a great impact on organisations and can lead to organisational sustainability.

Acknowledgment

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