



## Humanomics

Employee motivation an Islamic perspective

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# Employee Motivation: an Islamic perspective

## Introduction

In the dynamic business world of today, gaining a competitive advantage is one of the key objectives for the success of an organization. A number of organizations recognize this as their highest aspiration for survival in an aggressive industry. Indeed, to attain this goal of existence, organizations rely heavily on a workforce that is effective, efficient, dedicated and highly motivated.

Improving motivation of the workforce has always been a significant area of concentration for practitioners and academicians. Employees with a low level of motivation are most likely to concentrate less on their jobs, shirk their duties and responsibilities, deceive their supervisors and leave the organization if provided with another opportunity. However, employees who are motivated are more loyal, innovative, productive, and yield high quality results for work that they readily engage in.

Previous studies (e.g., Hassan 1995, Ahmad 2008, Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Amin 2011, Kamil et al. 2011, Sulaiman et al. 2013, Sulaiman et al. 2014, Bhatti et al. 2015) provide an understanding of an employee's beliefs, expectations, aims and objectives in life. Additionally, these studies assist organizations in understanding their employees' goals in both their professional and personal lives, whilst recognizing the need to motivate them. At the same time, they look to improving the involvement, loyalty, and commitment of the employees towards their firm. Certainly, understanding the factors that affect the motivation of employees is an immense challenge for companies, leaders and managers (Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Sulaiman et al. 2014). This holds true, especially as people value diverse objectives in life. People may have different needs and wants, values, goals, intentions, and expectations in life (Ahmad and Fontaine 2011).

A number of motivational theories attempt to explain the factors that have direct or indirect influence on motivation and organizational performance, such as employee motivation and other motivational factors, etc. (Reinholt 2006, Amin 2011, Sulaiman et al. 2014). Most of these theories strongly rely on conventional principles based on western viewpoints of human needs and nature. However, not much research has been carried out on other cross cultural and religious perspectives, and in particular, the Islamic perspective (Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Sulaiman et al. 2014, Bhatti et al. 2015).

As opposed to the western perspective, the Islamic view holds that human nature and human needs are diverse. The Islamic standpoint considers man as Allah's (God's) servant and vicegerent (Amin 2011, Sulaiman et al. 2013). In order to succeed in both this world and the hereafter, Muslims must follow the right path and refrain from all that is forbidden (Sulaiman et al. 2013).

The current paper aims to provide an understanding of employee motivation from the Islamic perspective. The main objectives of this study are to: understand Islamic motivation; and explore if Islamic spirituality, punishment and reward and justice motivate Muslim employees.

## Literature review

The term 'motivation', is derived from the Latin word 'movere', meaning 'to move' (Tanksy 2003). Motivation, in the current context, represents the process that arouses, energizes, directs,

and sustains behaviour and performance (Luthans 1998). It can be considered a process of stimulating people to perform and achieve a desired task. An understanding of the factors that drive employees can help managers to set job assignments and rewards to stimulate those factors. Hence, motivation can be used as a management tool in organizations (Sulaiman et al. 2014). Motivation is a multidimensional and complex topic to research. People are usually motivated by a combination of factors. Over the years, much has been written and researched about the theories of motivation. Reinholt (2006) argues that the literature on motivation has been categorised into two main positions: the organizational economic position focusing on extrinsic motivation; and the organizational behaviour position emphasizing intrinsic motivation. According to the author, motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is necessary to analyse and understand motivation and behaviour in organizations.

### ***Traditional and motivational theories***

Traditional theories can be categorized into content theories and process theories. Content theories emphasize on the specific factors that motivate employees, while process theories underline the psychological forces that have an effect on motivation.

Among the traditional content theories, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is the most influential. Maslow's (1943) theory proposes that human beings want (they always want and they want more!) and therefore a satisfied need is not a motivator of behavior. Also, human needs are arranged in levels - a hierarchy of importance. He organized human needs into 5 categories, namely, physiological, safety, social (sense of belonging), self-esteem and self-realization needs. The theory hypothesizes that once a need of inferior rank is satisfied (such as food, clothing, etc.) the next level need becomes dominant, and the person gets motivated to accomplish this higher rank need. According to this theory only an unsatisfied need could motivate behavior, with the dominant need being the primary factor for motivation.

McClelland (1985) identified three main motives - affiliation, power and achievement (Hicks and Gullett 1981). The achievement theory states that individuals behave by one or many combinations of needs. These correspond to social esteem as well as self-realization needs of Maslow's hierarchy. Another theory presented by Frederick Herzberg's (1964) is the 'Two Factors Theory'. He came upon this by interviewing 'white collar' employees and managers and identified the top five factors that contributed to employee dissatisfaction. These are: perceived fairness of company policy, pay, working conditions, relations with one's supervisor, and relations with co-workers. However, he states, that in order to satisfy or motivate employees, other factors were also required, which include: achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement. Hence, he labelled the factors that produce satisfaction as 'motivators' and the factors that produce dissatisfaction as 'hygiene factors'. It was identified that motivation factors are caused by internal generators in employees, while motivators that produce satisfaction are created by underlying conditions of the job itself. Contextual factors represent only the conditions necessary (hygiene factors) for the execution of work processes. Hence, the theory implies that managers need to identify and concentrate on both sets of characteristics to enhance job attitudes and employee productivity.

Steering further towards process theories, Vroom (1964) elaborated the 'expectancy theory', later developed by Porter and Lawler (1982). The theory determines a relationship between employees' motivation and their expectancies. It implies that motivation can be improved when a

clear relation between work performance and its results is established and these results help to satisfy a certain need.

Porter and Lawler (1982) stressed upon improvement in the work environment so that effective performance would lead to both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. This would pave the way to job satisfaction. According to them, intrinsic motivation involves the performance of an activity that is interesting and therefore provides spontaneous satisfaction to people. However, extrinsic motivation requires an instrumentality between the activity and certain separable consequences (e.g. verbal rewards), so that satisfaction is achieved from extrinsic consequences of the activity rather than the activity itself (Porter and Lawler 1982).

In Skinner's operant conditioning theory (Davis, 1987), based on learning theory, behaviour that is appropriately supported tends to be repeated rather than behaviour which is not appropriately supported, or punished. Simply put, individuals prefer to perform actions that lead to rewards and stop performing if no reward or even punishment is associated with it. Hence, behaviour seems to be a function of the reinforcements supplied by the environment. Then Adams (1975) developed the equity theory which explains people's perceptions of the way they are treated in comparison to others. This theory implies that fair treatment can lead to higher motivation, while a lack of fairness can reduce individual motivation.

According to Latham and Locke (1979), the goal setting theory postulates that the level of motivation and performance can be higher when the individual establishes specific objectives. Employees will pursue these objectives, even if they are complex and at a higher difficulty scale, but expect to be rewarded with performance feedback and recognition of their efforts.

Another theory, known as "self-determination theory", claims that human behaviour can be driven both by internal and external factors for individuals (Ryan and Deci 2000). Intrinsic motivation is created because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, while extrinsic motivation occurs when performing an action results in a separable outcome.

All these theories have emerged from the western viewpoint and therefore, unsurprisingly, they place little importance in the stances of other cultures or religions.

### ***Motivation from an Islamic Perspective***

Many Muslims will find their motivation in religion, as well as in their cultural heritage (Ahmad and Fontaine 2011). And any approach to the subject of motivation that fails to feature Islam, or produces results that are incompatible with the Islamic practices, would not be successful (Ahmad and Fontaine 2011).

The motivation of Muslims and Muslim workers to produce exceptional work and service is derived from a belief and the notion of self-fulfillment, upward mobility and up-lift of the material standards of living or service to the people (Ahmad 2008, Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Amin 2011, Hassan 1995, Kamil et al. 2011). Motivation may also be derived from the belief that as an owner of *Amanah* (the trust) on earth, man must be aware that his hard work is a form of *Amalsalih* (virtuous deed). This is the key to the achievement of *Falah* (true success) in this world and wellbeing in the hereafter. Man's work is also a form of *Ibadah* (servitude to God) if it conforms to divine injunctions. Importantly, the reward for good deeds is not confined to this world alone, but extends to the hereafter also. Similarly, the punishment for bad deeds is not restricted to this life, it may even be implemented after death (Ahmad 2008, Ahmad and

Fontaine 2011, Kamil et al. 2011). A number of Muslim scholars (e.g., Alawneh 1998, Jabnoun 2005, Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Amin 2011, Kamil et al. 2011, Kedah and Adamu 2011, Ramli and Osman-Gani 2011) have laid immense stress on the significance of motivation from the Islamic perspective in their works. There are more than a few factors which contribute to improving the motivation of a Muslim or an individual from the Islamic viewpoint. However, factors that feature largely in the writings of Muslim scholars on improving motivation of a believer are: 1) Spirituality, 2) Punishment and Reward, 3) and Justice.

Table 1. Motivation Factors

Motivation Factors	Authors
1. Spirituality	Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Amin 2011, Jabnoun 2005, Kamil et al. 2011, Kedha and Adamu 2011, Ramli and Osman-Gani 2011
2. Punishment and Reward	Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Amin 2011, Jabnoun 2005, Kamil et al. 2011, Kedha and Adamu 2011, Ramli and Osman-Gani 2011
3. Justice ( <i>Al- Adalah</i> )	Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Amin 2011, Kamil et al. 2011

Source: (Jabnoun 2005, Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Amin 2011, Kamil et al. 2011, Kedha and Adamu 2011, Ramli and Osman-Gani 2011)

### ***Spirituality***

Muslims derive their motivations either through reward and punishment or by spiritual motivation (Jabnoun 2005, Kamil et al. 2011). Jabnoun (2005) affirms that the most important motivation Muslims have is the conviction that all kinds of acts or works form part of *Ibadah* (worship/prayer) that an individual will be rewarded for. A belief such as this acts as a competitive advantage (Jabnoun 2005). In Islam, spiritual dimensions reflect the fundamental principles of *Iman* (faith), *Taqwa* (Islamic piety), *Tawbah* (repentance) and *Ihsan* (love of God).

*Iman (Faith)*: The word *Iman* (faith) means true belief in the unity of Allah (SWT); His angels His books; His messengers; the Day of Judgment and life after death; and belief in pre-destination or fate (Alawneh 1998, Amin 2011). For Muslims, *Iman* is the most primary and powerful motivating force as all their activities and actions are a manifestation of their *Iman* (Amin 2011). In the Holy Quran, Allah (SWT) states, "Say: O Muhammad, (PBUH) my prayers, my sacrifice, my life and my death belong to Allah; He has no partner and I am ordered to be among those who submit" (Quran, 6: 162-164). Muslims regard all their work as *Ibadah* (worship). This creates real inner motivation and self-direction (Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Amin 2011, Jabnoun 2005, Kamil et al. 2011). It is this belief and basic intention that leads Muslims to seek Allah's pleasure by demonstrating a high degree of devotion in every task they undertake (Ahmad 1998). The foremost components of this motive are belief in Allah (the Eternal, the Absolute, and the Creator of the Universe), and the fact that man must be held accountable for his deeds in this life as well as the hereafter (Alawneh 1998, Amin 2011).

Therefore, *Iman* paves a path to knowledge and wisdom, demonstrated by the selection of the correct thing from several alternatives (i.e. the knowledge of *Halal* and *Haram*). And there remains no excuse for an individual not to choose what is good and to avoid evil (Alawneh 1998, Amin 2011).

*Taqwa (Islamic Piety)*: Muslims also derive their motivation from “*Taqwa*”. The word *Taqwa* has been mentioned more than 258 times in the Holy Quran. Allah (SWT) says: “O you who believe, have *Taqwa* of Allah” (Quran, 3:102). *Taqwa* refers to the fear of Allah (SWT) demonstrated by a Muslim’s observance to His orders and commands (Alawneh 1998, Amin 2011). Almighty Allah (SWT) states in His Holy Book, “Have *Taqwa* of Allah as much as you are able to.” (Quran, 64:16). It is this fear of Allah and avoidance of the forbidden that keeps Muslims motivated to give their best in all their actions. Alawneh (1998) quotes Al-Isawi (1986) and states that refraining from all that Allah asks us to shun and avoid, such as disobedience and evil deeds, is a kind of prevention of falling into wrong. Adhering to Allah's injunctions and controlling one's baser instincts is similarly beneficial. Man learns to obey God and His Prophet and to respect the law. This is how he achieves *Taqwa* and *Iman*. Hence, *Taqwa* becomes a major force of motivation for human behavior that directs man towards excellence and points him towards self-control and growth. As a result, he becomes an empowered, morally strong individual.

*Ihsan (love of God)*: *Ihsan* is the love of God (Ahmad 2011), whereas *Taqwa* is the fear of God (Allah) and the feeling of God’s presence (Ramli and Osman-Gani 2011). It is this love of God that further motivates and inspires a Muslim to work towards achieving God’s Pleasure (Ahmad 2011, Ramli and Osman-Gani 2011). The Prophet (PBUH) describes *Ihsan* as follows: “To worship God as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion, then you must consider that He is looking at you” (Sahih Bukhari, Al Hadith, 47). Hence, Love of God motivates believers to perform their best and refrain from all that has been forbidden.

*Tawbah (Repentance)*: The concept of *Tawbah* holds great significance for Muslims. It is also a fundamental tool of motivation (Amin 2011). Allah (SWT) says in the Quran, “... if any have done wrong and have thereafter substituted good to take the place of evil, truly I am Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Quran, 27:11). It is important to recognize that without *Tawbah* (repentance), an individual will continue to pursue the course of evil and will not attempt to change for the better (Amin 2011). Traditionally, *Tawbah* (repentance) encourages an individual to do as much good work as possible to compensate for all the wrong that he does. *Tawbah* provides the assistance or strength needed to refrain from immoral deeds and protects one from becoming a wrongdoer (Alawneh 1998, Amin 2011).

### ***Punishment and Reward***

As stated earlier, Muslims acquire their motivation either through “reward and punishment” or through “spiritual motivation” (Jabnoun 2005, Kamil et al. 2011). At various stages of life, many individuals tend to become complacent with the status quo. They have no desire to improve things regardless of the possible reward. Fear of punishment might act as a better motivating force for such individuals (Ahmad and Fontaine, 2011, Amin, 2011, Jabnoun 2005, Kamil et al. 2011). However, at times they may also react due to other factors, such as love and hate, though love and hate can be rendered as hope and fear respectively (Jabnoun 2005).

In Islam, reward and punishment does not only pertain to this world, but is also applicable to the hereafter. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and other Messengers of Allah (peace be upon them all) were sent with both glad tidings and warnings to their people (Jabnoun 2005, Kamil et al. 2011). Allah (SWT) says in the Quran, “Verily, We have sent you in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner”, “And Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings” (Quran, 2:119, 2:213). In addition, Allah (SWT) also says “Messengers who gave good news as well as warnings, that mankind, after (the coming) of the messengers, should have no plea against Allah: For Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise... We Send the Messengers only to give good news and to warn” (Quran, 4:165, 6:48).

Jabnoun (2005) explains that Allah (SWT) has sent Messengers to enlighten mankind about the reward in the hereafter, as well as to inform them about the penalty and punishment in the hereafter. Nevertheless, punishment is reserved for the wrongdoers and it should be noted here that it is not a motivator (Ahmad and Fontaine 2011, Amin 2011, Jabnoun 2005, Kamil et al. 2011). On the other hand, reward is for those who do good deeds and pursue the right path. This is also revealed in several verses in the Quran where Allah (SWT) says “As for him (a disbeliever in the Oneness of Allah) who does wrong, we shall punish him; and then he will be brought back unto his Lord; Who will punish him with a terrible torment (Hell). But as for him who believes (in Allah's Oneness) and works righteousness, he shall have the best reward, (*Paradise*), and we (*Dhul-Qarnain*) shall speak unto him mild words (as instructions).” (Quran, 18:87-88). In another verse, Allah (SWT) states that “whosoever does any good act (even) to a weight of a particle will see it. And whosoever does evil (even) to the weight of a particle will see it.” (Quran, 99:7-8).

It is evident from the Quranic verses above that a believer is rewarded whenever he follows the righteous path as ordained by Allah (SWT) in the Quran, and is punished when they indulge in deeds that are forbidden or prohibited. At the same time, Allah (SWT) does not burden anyone beyond his capacity and He never fails to appreciate even the slightest good deed done by an individual.

### **Justice**

*“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor, Allah is a Better Protector to both (than you). So follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you avoid justice, and if you distort your witness or refuse to give it, verily, Allah is Ever Well-Acquainted with what you do.” (Quran, 4:135)*

It is no exaggeration that justice lies at the heart of Quranic injunctions. The Quran itself asserts that the purpose of its revelation is to establish justice and equity (Amin 2011). Extreme inequalities are discouraged in Islam to establish moral justice in society. This promotes kindness and mutual love among the members of the community (Ahmad and Fontaine 2011). Indeed, “justice means a harmonious condition or state of affairs whereby everything is right such as cosmos, or similarly a state of equilibrium” (Ramli and Osman-Gani 2011 p. 272). It is significant that the principle of justice must be observed by all Muslims, at all times, in all their activities. As Allah (SWT) states in the Quran “Allah (God) does command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man that you judge with justice [...]” (Quran, 4:58). It is for this reason that justice is the foundation stone of human motivation (Amin, 2011). Hence, it is only by establishing an environment of justice that

a society, community, institution or an organization can strengthen and increase the level of motivation among people (Amin 2011).

Ramli and Osman-Gani (2011) reaffirm Lukman (1995) in the fact that “Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized that justice should by no means be compromised by personal affiliations or other considerations. A believer is required to practice and enforce justice even against themselves. Therefore, individuals must be just in their judgments, transactions, agreements and treaties, as well as in fulfilling their responsibilities towards family, society and work”.

## Method

The present study constitutes of the first phase of a larger study, starting with qualitative (case study) research. Qualitative research approach was employed to understand and examine the views of the respondents. It was ensured that no information was provided beforehand to the respondents and neither was any opinion shared about possible answers. A semi-structured interviewing technique was adopted and the respondents were asked to express their own thoughts on each question provided. According to Berg (2007), standardized interviews are based on formally structured questions. This aids the collection of responses which are comparable. Moreover, the researchers employed essential questions, probing questions and throw-away questions for effective and efficient data collection.

The key questions were focused at the primary themes of the study— understanding of employee motivation, benefits of employee motivation, motivational theories practiced and implemented, religion and employee motivation, Islamic spirituality and employee motivation, reward and punishment and employee motivation, justice and employee motivation. During interviews, probing questions were asked to seek additional information from respondents and to provide them with leads during the interview. It is customary to use throw-away questions to build a rapport with participants.

## Research Participants

Respondent	Gender	Title and Organization	Age	Work Experience
1. Respondent 1	Male	Former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (Multinational)	61	37 years
2. Respondent 2	Male	Chief Financial Officer (CFO) (Multinational)	56	31 years
3. Respondent 3	Male	Vice President of Production (Industrial Manufacturing)	55	30 years
4. Respondent 4	Male	Operations manager (Industrial Manufacturing)	45	20 years
5. Respondent 5	Male	Quality Control (Multinational)	39	14 years
6. Respondent 6	Male	Former Dean (Higher Education)	57	31 years
7. Respondent 7	Female	Marketing manager (Advertising)	45	19 years
8. Respondent 8	Female	Customer relationship manager (Multinational Bank)	38	13 years



9.	Respondent 9	Male	Purchasing manager (Industrial Manufacturing)	42	17 years
10.	Respondent 10	Female	Professor (Higher Education)	52	25 years
11.	Respondent 11	Male	Former Director General (Govt)/ Managing Director (Private Education system)	63	40 years
12.	Respondent 12	Female	Relationship Manager (Multinational Bank)	37	12 years
13.	Respondent 13	Female	HR Manager (Telecom)	40	14 years

A sample of thirteen experienced academicians and practitioners from renowned private organizations and academic institutions were selected for the study. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling as the researchers aimed to develop a comprehensive understanding of motivation from an Islamic viewpoint. The researchers selected knowledgeable and experienced professionals from Malaysia and Pakistan by utilizing their personal and professional networks. The respondents were former CEO's, business consultants, permanent employees in senior managerial positions with no less than ten years of working experience. Significantly, all respondents participating in this research were Muslim, and working in Muslim organizations. Hence, religious beliefs, principles and values played a vital role in shaping their understanding and knowledge. It was observed that the participants agreed in general that Islamic spirituality, reward and punishment and justice could improve employee motivation among a Muslim workforce.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

The researchers conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with the respondents. Interviews lasted approximately between 40 to 45 minutes. The respondents were asked key questions, probing questions, as well as throw-away questions. All interviews with the consent of the respondents were audio taped and later transcribed. The transcribed data was coded and scaled down to meaningful themes as stressed by Miles and Huberman (1994). In addition, the researchers encouraged the participants to voice their feelings openly on the subject matter. As highlighted in the table, respondents include 9 males and 4 females, having sound managerial experience, belonging to different industries such as, manufacturing, telecommunications, banking and education.

### ***Findings and Discussions***

The present section covers reporting of the results of this exploratory study, organized in accordance to the research objective. From the interviews, the following themes were extracted.

### ***Understanding of Motivation***

More than a few explanations were presented by the respondents that could exhibit their understanding of motivation. In explaining their understanding about motivation *Respondent 1* affirmed that "motivation is the inclination of an individual to strive and maintain an effort towards achieving organizational aims and objectives". Certainly, one of the most important functions of management is increasing employee motivation. Employees who are less motivated are likely to expend little or no effort at work, produce inferior work output, demonstrate a lack

of commitment and if given good opportunity, can also exit from the organization. On the other hand, highly motivated employees are determined, creative and efficient. They are likely to produce high quality results willingly for whatever job they carry out. *Respondents 2, 3 and 5* were of the view that motivation is the urge of achieving the goals set by an organization. In addition, motivation is the key to improving performance.

*Respondents 5, 6, 10 and 11* explained that motivation is a psychological process that brings a sense of direction and purpose to one's thoughts and behavior. Also, motivation is the proclivity to work and behave in a willful manner to achieve explicit needs. *Respondents 4 and 7* expressed that motivation is a person's inner determination to fulfill a need, and the drive to accomplish satisfaction. Likewise, *Respondents 8, 12 and 13* stated that motivation is the inner force and commitment that drives an individual to accomplish personal as well as organizational goals. It is evident from the explanations of the respondents that motivation plays a vital role for achieving success and enhances an individual's purpose and fortitude in attaining required results.

### ***Understanding benefits/advantages of Employee Motivation***

Motivated employees can bring about positive outcomes for the organization. *Respondent 1* opined that "with 37 years of work experience I believe that a well-motivated employee is as good as getting half the work done. In fact, if people are truly motivated and set their hearts and minds at work, the probability of getting the work done with greater efficiency, competence, quality, and on time becomes immense. Accordingly, it becomes easier for organizations to achieve their goals and objectives". *Respondent 3* stressed that a "motivated workforce has a positive impact on the organization, assisting the organization to achieve its sustainable competitive advantage, which at times, cannot be achieved through technology, machinery or equipment". *Respondent 2* was of the view that "a motivated employee is always easy to deal with and has the drive to perform his best at work. He knows what is required from them and is always ready to do it. Thus, it is less difficult to channelize them and their positive energy towards achieving organizational goals and objectives".

*Respondents 4, 5 and 7* acknowledged that the motivated attitude of an employee's acts as a source for improving self-satisfaction, thus empowering them to understand their own value and worth. Likewise, *Respondents 9, 11 and 12* highlighted that one of the key benefits of employee motivation is that it reduces employee turnover to some extent and cultivates a positive attitude among employees towards solving managerial issues. Furthermore, employees with a high level of motivation have less absenteeism and less downtime as affirmed by *Respondent 13*.

Notably, it is apparent from the justification and reasoning of the respondents that motivated employees can provide great benefits to the organization.

### ***Theories for Motivating Employees***

In the past, physiologists and behavioral scientists have presented various theories for motivating employees. These theories have assisted leaders and managers to improve the overall level of motivation among their employees. Numerous motivation theories were highlighted by the respondents affirming them as highly effective and useful for improving motivation among Muslim employees.

*Respondent 1* stressed that "leaders or managers can improve the motivation level of their employees by understanding their needs and wants, then aligning the solution to satisfy those desires through the attainment of organizational goals. And this can possibly be well-managed by utilizing Maslow's hierarchy of needs. However, it is believed that Maslow's hierarchy of needs,

in most of the cases, is not an appropriate fit for Muslims, as their needs can be better addressed by employing *Maqasid al-Sharikh* (reference to Islamic jurisprudence). *Respondent 2* explained that “there are different set of needs that may motivate an individual in diverse settings and time periods. Additionally, an individual may be motivated by a different set of needs in the same time period. For that reason, Alderfer’s ERG theory can be utilized for motivating employees. Nevertheless, religious faith and belief, coupled with different motivation principles, can yield better results for managers and leaders”.

*Respondents 3,4,5,7 and 8* were of the view that needs and wants evolve throughout one’s life. As time goes by, one achieves greater clarity about his own aspirations in life. Therefore, McClelland’s Achievement Need Theory can be adopted by managers to improve employee motivation. Likewise, *Respondents 6, 9, 10 and 11* agreed that Goal Theory is more appropriate for managers for motivating employees. By setting goals, employees or individuals are motivated to take actions to attain those goals.

Importantly, all respondents did concur that it is a combination of different theories that ought to be utilized by leaders and managers for motivating their employees. They also agreed that the equity theory holds a lot of weight, since individuals feel more motivated if they recognize that they are treated fairly and without discrimination within the organization. However, Islamic values, beliefs and principles, coalesced with conventional motivating theories, models and concepts can produce better results for motivating Muslim employees at the work place.

### ***Islamic Spirituality and Motivation***

Islamic spirituality refers to faith, actions and behavior which are aligned with Islamic principles that a Muslim should follow for achieving the pleasure, help and forgiveness of Allah (SWT) (Bhatti 2015, Bhatti et al. 2015). *Respondent 2* stated that man is Allah’s best creation and that Allah (SWT) has granted man two positions on His earth: Allah’s vicegerent and Allah’s servant. These two roles act as a true source of inspiration and motivation for Muslims. Be it work or family, a true believer who is spiritually strong would always be motivated to do well. *Respondents 3, 4, 5 and 6* stressed that Islamic spirituality takes into account the fundamental principles of *Iman* (faith), *Tawbah* (repentance), *Ihsan* (love of God) and *Taqwa* (Islamic piety). These principles govern the inner purpose, drives and motives of an employee, acting as a critical source of motivation. It also helps steer them towards the right path and to refrain from all that Allah (SWT) has ordained as *Haram* (forbidden). By abstaining from *Haram*, and following the right path, an individual may possibly feel content, spiritually strong and more motivated.

*Respondents 1, 7, 8, 9 and 11* were of the view that employees who are spiritually awakened will execute all activities with the basic intention of seeking Allah’s pleasure in this world and the next. Indeed, their religious zeal for seeking Allah’s (SWT) pleasure motivates them more towards truth and perfection. Thus, spirituality can and does act as a strong motivator for individuals/employees. Furthermore, *Respondents 10, 12 and 13* added that for Muslims, “work is a part of worship”. This is likely to improve the overall level of dedication and involvement of individuals. What’s more, employees with a high level of spirituality tend to display a greater sense of responsibility and accountability before Allah (SWT) as well as their employers. They are also likely to perform their tasks with more dedication, keenness and loyalty, regardless of the work environment, job difficulty level or resources available.

In general, all respondents affirmed that Islamic spirituality does improve the overall level of motivation among Muslim employees.

### ***Reward, Punishment and Motivation***

In Islam, reward and punishment guards one's behavior and intentions. In general, reward works as a form of encouragement to do right, whereas punishment serves to make one disciplined and organized (Bhatti 2015, Bhatti et al. 2015). Numerous explanations were presented by the respondents as to how punishment and reward can assist in improving overall employee motivation. *Respondent 1* affirmed that "Punishment is not... a source of motivation. Rather, it provides a boundary beyond which a group's member must not step. Reward, on the other hand, is a form of motivation to urge members to act in accordance with the rules of the group". He goes on to add that, by adhering to the rules of Allah the member will be rewarded, thereby setting an example for other members. From an Islamic perspective, punishment for those who transgress can be meted out on earth as well as in the hereafter. Similarly, Allah (SWT) has promised to reward those who do good deeds in both this world and in the next. *Respondents 2,3,4,6 and 7* explained that reward inspires believers to work harder and promotes prosperity, while punishment holds them back from all that is forbidden. Surely, Allah (SWT) never lays a burden on one who cannot endure it. He is appreciative of the smallest good deed by a believer. Moreover, when a Muslim employee believes that "work is a part of worship", he tends to try his utmost to do right in order to attain Allah's (SWT) blessings and refrains from all that is prohibited. Hence, reward and punishment both, act as a source of motivation for individuals. *Respondents 5, 8, 11 and 13* stressed that the reward a believer earns for his good deeds is due to the grace and kindness of Allah (SWT) and Allah (SWT) surely rewards those who follow the right path. However, punishment is decreed for the deeds that are immoral or sinful and Allah (SWT) has full authority to either punish an individual for his sins or to forgive him. Importantly, punishment does not act as a motivator but is a mode to control ones actions, deeds and behavior. Similarly, *Respondents 9, 10 and 12* acknowledged that the strongest motivation for a believer is to obey the commandments of Allah (SWT). By doing so, he would develop feelings of contentment and satisfaction. A believer's greatest aspiration is a blissful life in both this world and the next. On the other hand, whoever violates the instructions of Allah (SWT) may expect endless sorrow or punishment. This threat of punishment acts as a strong deterrent for a believer from evil, immoral and impious deeds. Therefore it can be established that reward and punishment do assist in improving the motivational level of Muslim employees.

### ***Justice and Motivation***

According to Islam, justice is one of the main sources for improving human motivation. *Respondent 1* affirmed that justice is a source of motivation as it appeals to human values. As Muslims, we are commanded by Allah (SWT) to safeguard the rights of others, be just and fair in our dealings with all individuals (even if they are our enemies), side with the oppressed, be kind to orphans and the poor, and not overstep the boundaries set by Allah (SWT). The respondent added that by "following these decrees of Allah (SWT), a leader can establish a fair and just environment in an organization. Such an environment can assist in improving the overall motivation of employees". *Respondent 2* stressed that without justice, an individual will not be able to predict how he is going to be judged. Notably, employees want to be rewarded and recognized for their hard work. If not, people will fail to retain the same level of output or

performance. "A Muslim being Allah's (SWT) vicegerent needs to ensure that people are treated and rewarded in a just manner, as it can eventually benefit in improving employee motivation". Respondents 3, 5, 7 and 8 explained that managers have to ensure that their subordinates perceive them as fair based on their actions. Furthermore, from an Islamic perspective, it is necessary for a leader to explain to her subordinates in detail, the rationale behind a particular decision before it is implemented. Such a practice would improve the overall confidence of the workers and also eliminate any feeling of injustice. Respondents 4,9,10 and 13 acknowledged that it is extremely important that justice must always be adopted by Muslims in every aspect of their lives. Justice appears to be a major factor for improving employee motivation. In particular, if an organization is able to craft an environment that is fair and unbiased, it would naturally support the employee's drive to excel. Therefore, it is apparent from the reasoning of the respondents that justice does play an important role in motivating Muslim employees.

### Conclusion

From the results of the study, it is evident that employee motivation is of great concern for present day management. The fast changing work environment of today requires motivated employees that can uphold an organization, and allow it to survive in today's competitive business world. Top management needs to have a clear insight into the factors that contribute towards a motivated, efficient work force. This study clearly highlights that the western viewpoint of employee motivation varies from the Islamic perspective. Notably, Islamic beliefs and values integrated with conventional motivational concepts are likely to yield better results in motivating Muslim employees. The study highlights that the Islamic perspective lays more weight on Islamic spirituality, reward and punishment, and justice. These three constructs appear to act more compellingly in improving the motivation of Muslim employees to succeed. Be it in the home or at work, the Muslim tends to employ these principles in order to attain the blessings of Allah (SWT) and gain rewards in both this world and the next. The current study provides evidence that these three factors can contribute substantially in improving motivation amongst Muslim employees.

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