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THE SYTHESIZING PROCESS OF WORK MOTIVATION BETWEEN WESTERN AND ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Motivation is probably one of the most frequently and extensively studied psychological concepts. The theoretical framework of motivation focuses on understanding and predicting the rationale underlying of human behaviour. It is a multi-faceted psychological process, which energizes individuals' behaviours toward a desired goal or objective. This is what Islam tries to apply – the techniques of motivation to enhance morale and commitment of employers – employees; and problems occur when administrators fail to integrate both the Western and Muslim perspectives of motivation. In this respect, this study aims to determine why and how this knowledge gap can be overcome particularly in organizations so as to drive administrators to become excellent workers.

Among the objectives are to elucidate the prevailing concepts of work motivation from both the Muslim and Western perspectives as well as to study the similarities and differences of work motivation in both perspectives in terms of definitions, rewards, evaluation and implications to management.

This study is based on a qualitative research project which is designed to inductively build concepts, hypotheses and theories rather than to test them. The framework of the study will draw upon the concepts, terms, definitions and theories of a particular literature and disciplinary orientation. The focus lies to thematically compare the Muslim and Western perspectives.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Motivation is probably one of the most frequently and extensively studied psychological concepts. The utility of motivation theories has been incorporated into other areas, such as learning, personality and employees' behaviour and job satisfaction. In these situations, motivation has advanced beyond theory to become a useful managerial resource for shaping behaviour.

The question of how to motivate someone is a complex one and one for which there are no quick answers. Yet one 'law' of motivation seems to apply quite consistently: People are usually motivated or driven to behave in a way that they feel will lead them to rewards (Dessler, 1991). So, as a rough-and-ready rule, motivating someone requires two things: first, find out what the person wants and hold it out as a possible reward and second, see to it that he feels an effort on his part will probably lead to obtaining that reward.

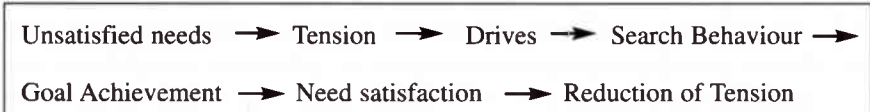
Yet, motivation is a complex process composed of physical, psychological, social and cultural needs, which operates both individually, and interactively to energize human behaviour. Needs activate the motivation process to direct the action of the behaviour, to determine the strength of the response, and to sustain the duration of the effort involved. Since this is so, motivation is a multi-faceted psychological process, which energizes individual's behaviours toward a desired goal or objective.

1.1 Definitions of Motivation

Here is a selection of definitions that have been put forward by various researchers:

"Motivation is the willingness to do something and is conditional by this action's ability to satisfy some need for the individual. A need means some internal state that makes certain outcomes appear attractive." (DeCenzo & Robbins, 1988)

Diagram 1: Basic Motivational Process (De Cenzo & Robbins, 1988)



"Motivation comes from the Latin verb "movere" which means to move."
(Newman and Hodgetts, 1998)

"Motivation is a complex process composed of physical, psychological, social and cultural needs which operate both individually, and interactively to energize human behaviour."
(Lindner, 1998 & Singer, 1990)

In summary, the word 'motivation' according to many writers can be seen as a process or force that will make humans behave in such a way so as to achieve a goal.

1.2 Problem Statement

In work motivation, problems tend to occur mainly due the failure of administrators to integrate both the Western and Muslim motivational concepts or purely failure to inculcate both perspectives in their organization's work culture. Such highlighted problems that prevail include – “low productivity” skills mentioned by Hassan (1993) in a monograph entitled Moral and Ethical Issues because workers tend to emphasize more the Western concept and take less consideration of the spiritual aspects.

Besides, knowledge of the Western concepts of work motivation is made known in most of the published references, but this is not the case with the Muslim perspective. Hence, based on the view provided by Hassan (1993), the integration of the concept with holistic knowledge is vital to instill outstanding ethics and spiritual values among the workers.

1.3 Objectives of This Paper

The objectives of this paper are to:

1. Elucidate the prevailing concepts of work motivation in terms of their definitions and theories from a Western perspective.
2. Elucidate the prevailing concepts of work motivation in terms of their definitions and theories from an Islamic perspective.
3. Compare the similarities and differences between work motivation from the Western and Muslim perspectives in terms of definitions, rewards/appraisals and punishments, evaluation of both Western and Islamic theories, and the implications of work motivation to management.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Methodology is important as it contains a few important aspects:

2.1 Sampling Design

This research paper has no sampling because the examples given are adapted from relevant documents so as to compare between the perspectives of work motivation between Western and Muslim organizations.

2.2 Research Design

With regard to this paper, qualitative research is used to inductively build rather than to test concepts, hypotheses and theories. The framework of the study will draw upon the concepts, terms, definitions and theories of a particular literature and disciplinary orientation. This framework in turn will generate the "problem" of the study, data collection and analysis techniques and the interpretation of findings.

The study focuses on the thematic analysis of the Muslim and Western perspectives. This method is used because qualitative research makes the researcher creatively describe phenomena rather than giving attention to hypotheses to guide the investigation. (Merriam: 1998) Hence, the findings will be more comprehensive, holistic, expansive and richly descriptive.

The underlying principle of qualitative research is not statistical methods, but problem solving through the use of a wide number of data collection methods and the application of diverse conceptual frameworks. Moreover, in qualitative research the attitudinal stance is as important as the intellectual approach used.

Consequently, it is believed that qualitative research can carry out creative evaluation. Taking this into great consideration, we will begin by describing the Western views of work motivation in Section 3.1. The writing will begin with introduction, definitions and scope of work motivation and theories of work motivation. The same pattern is followed in Section 3.2 where Islamic work motivation will be described. Section 4 will include a comparison between work motivation according to the Western and Muslim perspectives. Finally, Section 5 will be the 'dessert' for the whole paper whereby implications will be brought forward so as to draw conclusions. This method is used so as to provide a better understanding and easy reference for the study.

2.3 Data Collection

This part of the report describes the specifics of gathering the data. External sources are created outside the organization and are more varied than internal sources. There are also better-defined methods for finding them. This project paper is restricted to published sources, although other sources of information may be useful.

Computerized databases from EBSCO concerning human resource management are used to address the topic of work motivation. The files are sets of records grouped together for storage. They may be accessed through online search and CD ROMs.

The second source used is books, particularly past and recent publications as well as the complete works by the renowned scholars in the fields of work motivation. The third source is from monologues that provide ideas of generating work motivation from the perspective of Muslims. The fourth is from journals; particularly written so as to compare the theories of work motivation between Westerns and Muslims.

The last major source of published information consists of other diverse material from special collections. Within this category there are many reference books, each a compendium of a range of information. A second group includes university publications, of which there are seminar papers, and research records.

2.4 Data Analysis

This project paper is concerned with qualitative analysis. The reason for choosing this method is that the writer is interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed. Besides, it is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible.

Qualitative analysis primarily employs an inductive research strategy. It builds up abstractions, concepts, hypotheses or theories rather than tests existing theory. No statistical findings will be presented as compared to deductive research method. As is the case in other forms of qualitative research, the investigator is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and assumes an inductive stance and strives to derive meaning from the data. The end result of this type of qualitative research is a theory that emerges from, or is "grounded" in the data – hence, grounded data (proposed in Merriam, 1998).

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Work motivation is an important dimension of organizational behaviour. The achievement of organizational goals with efficiency and effectiveness depends to a great extent on motivation. Motivation briefly, can be defined as the desire within an individual that stimulates him or her to action. It is one of the most serious problems being faced by almost all types of organizations, especially with industry and business. On the contrary, Muslims define work motivation as actions that have proper intention. Islam does not specify adequate and comprehensive definitions. Accordingly, whatever actions are carried out by Muslims must be accompanied by sincere intentions so as to acquire the rewards from the Almighty.

The founding fathers of work motivation in the Western perspective, namely Maslow (in Harvard Business Review 1991) Herzberg (in Harvard Business Review 1991), McClelland (in Harvard Business Review 1991) and the rest believed that work motivation is an essential determinant for each employee in an organization. Incentives and rewards must be given to the employees to get satisfying end results.

Islamic descriptions of work motivation do not offer a very sound framework for a better understanding of the issue in hand, yet the concept of work motivation in Islam is quite comprehensive and balanced; it includes both material and spiritual dimensions. Islam considers that work is a part of worship (ibadah) provided it is done with the right intention and in accordance with the commandments of Allah. On the whole, Islamic principles of work motivation are far superior to the modern concepts and theories of motivation.

3.1 Western Theories of Motivation

3.1.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

According to Singer et. al. (1990), Maslow's needs hierarchy is perhaps the most widely known theory relating individual needs to motivation. The theory attempts to show how the healthy personality grows and develops over time and how that personality comes to manifest itself in motivated behaviour.

Maslow contends that people are beings whose needs guide behaviour. According to Maslow, a need influences a person's activities until it has been satisfied. Further, his theory holds that an individual's needs are arranged in a hierarchical fashion from the very fundamental (e.g. food, shelter) to the most advanced (e.g. self fulfillment). Individuals, it is hypothesized, attend to needs in a sequential fashion, moving from the bottom of the hierarchy toward the top, as lower level needs are satisfied. Maslow further mentioned that lower level needs must be satisfied, in general, before higher-level needs are activated sufficiently to drive behaviour. (Frunzi & Savini, 1992, Kossen, 1991)

Maslow distinguishes between two basic categories of needs: deficiency needs and growth needs. He posits that if the individual is to be healthy and secure, deficiency needs must be satisfied. "Needs for safety, the feeling of belonging, love and respect (from others) are all clearly deficits" (Zedeck & Cascio, 1984). The individual will fail to develop a healthy personality to the extent that these needs are not met.

In contrast, growth needs are those that related to the development and achievement of one's potential. For Maslow the idea of growth needs is more vague than the concept of deficiency needs: "growth, individuation, autonomy, self-actualization, self-development, productiveness, self-realization are all crudely synonymous, designating a vaguely perceived area rather than a sharply defined concept". (Lawler, 2000)

3.1.2 Alderfer's Existence-Relatedness Growth Theory (ERG)

This theory is the most popular extension and refinement of Maslow's theory of needs. As Maslow's model was not developed specifically for work organizations, Clayton Alderfer's theory (in Dessler, 1991) attempted to establish a conceptualization of human needs that is relevant to organizational settings. In extending Maslow's theory, Alderfer argued that the need categories could be collapsed into three more general classes:

- i. Existence: These are needs related to human existence and are comparable to Maslow's physiological needs and some of his safety needs.
- ii. Relatedness: These are needs that involve interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Relatedness needs are similar to Maslow's belongingness needs and some of his safety and esteem/ego needs.
- iii. Growth: These are needs associated with the development of the human potential. Included in this category are needs corresponding to Maslow's self-esteem and self actualization needs.

3.1.3 Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory

French (1990) and Singer (1990) shared the opinion that Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory (in Harvard Business Review, 1991) is, perhaps, the most controversial theory of work motivation. The original research used in developing the theory was conducted with several hundred accountants and engineers in several firms. The key factors in motivation and satisfaction (motivators) are achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement. A second group of factors, called the hygiene factors, include company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations with the supervisor and working conditions. Herzberg claimed that if these factors are negative or absent, dissatisfaction results. The presence of positive factors by themselves, however, does not lead to satisfaction and motivation.

3.1.4 McClelland's Learned Needs Theory

McClelland (in Harvard Business Review, 1991) contends that individuals acquire certain needs from the culture of a society by learning from the events that they experience, particularly in early life. For the needs that people may learn are the need for achievement (n Ach), the need for power (n Pow), the need for affiliation (n Aff) and the need for autonomy (n Aut). Once learned, these needs may be regarded as personal predispositions that affect the way people perceive work situations and that influence their pursuit of certain goals. (De Cenzo & Robbins, 1988)

3.1.5 McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

In most organizations, day-to-day operations are significantly influenced by the relationship between workers and managers. McGregor (in Lindner, 1998), a management consultant and author, accepted the concept of a needs hierarchy but felt that management had failed to do so. In a book entitled "The Human Side of Enterprise", he outlines a set of assumptions that he says influences the thinking of most managers. He divides the assumptions into two: Theory X and Theory Y.

3.1.5.1 Theory X: A Pessimistic View

This theory represents a pessimistic view of human nature. People do not really want to work – they have to be pushed, closely supervised and threatened with some type of punishment. Because they have little or no ambition, workers prefer to avoid responsibility and will seek security as their major goal.

Thus theory X reflects the "carrot and stick" philosophy, combining punishment and rewards to motivate employees. (Singer, 1990)

3.1.5.2 Theory Y: An Optimistic View

Peoples' attitudes toward work depend on their previous job experiences and the conditions surrounding the work itself. If employees are able to understand and relate their personal goals to their organization's goals, they will tend to be somewhat self directed and will not need to be threatened or coerced into working. When proper encouragements are given, people will seek responsibility and exercise considerable imagination and creativity in carrying out their responsibilities.

3.1.6 Locke's Goal Setting Theory

When it was formulated by Locke (in Sherman and Bohlander, 1992), this theory assumed that motivation is a result of rational and intentional behaviour. The direction of the behaviour is a function of the goal individuals' set and their efforts toward achieving these goals. To fully understand, motivation requires a thorough analysis of the processes people undergo in setting and achieving their goals.

Originally, Locke formulated goal setting theory based on two principles: goal difficulty and goal specificity. Still, the model has been expanded to incorporate goal acceptance and goal commitment (Singer, 1990, Baron & Paulus, 1991).

In brief, goal difficulty is the degree to which goals are viewed by individuals as challenging. Goal specificity refers to whether or not the goal has been stated in general terms or in highly specific terms. These goals are understandable, measurable and easily modifiable. Goal acceptance is simply the degree to which individuals accept goals as their own whereby goal commitment is the dedication which individuals extend toward reaching the set objective.

3.2 Islamic Work Motivation

Islam does not provide adequate and comprehensive definitions of work motivation like the Western theories do. Accordingly, Islam serves as a basis. Work motivation is best practiced when one has proper intention (niyyah). The intention must be to serve human kind endlessly as a means to acquire rewards from Allah, the Almighty.

3.2.1 Moral Ethical Foundation

As Nik Mustapha Hj. Nik Hassan (in Syed Othman al-Habshi, 1996) stated, there are three factors related to the ethical foundations – purity and cleanliness (Taharah), obedience to God and generosity and forgiving (Samahah).

3.2.1.1 Purity and Cleanliness (Taharah)

Muslims are requested to possess and maintain both inward purity and outward cleanliness. Inwardly, man must acquire and practice all the noble qualities of ethical values such as honesty, sincerity, benevolence, etc. Outwardly man must project an appropriate image in terms of attitude, manner or behaviour, dress, and speech.

3.2.1.2 Obedience to God: Seeking for Truth

Truth in Islam only comes from God. A man who is seeking for truth will only attain it through submission to God. Obedience to God will develop within man the inclination to do justice to himself and also to the members of the organization.

3.2.1.3 Generosity and Forgiving (Samahah)

The ethics of samahah is highly essential for individuals to possess as members of the organization. In a man's relationship with his fellow men, these attributes of generosity and forgiving can create a very conducive atmosphere for the organization to prosper. Unity and harmony in the organization are stabilizing factors for firm foundations.

3.2.2 Spiritual Motivation

Motivation in Islam is not restricted to monetary and material incentives but includes spiritual incentives, which have proven their effectiveness throughout history. Good words and good encouragement as well as recognition are also vital to boost a worker's sense of motivation. This is supported by Surah Ibrahim, verses 24 and 26.

المرتكف لله مثلا كلمة طيبة كشجرة طيبة اصلها ثابت و فرعها في
السماء.....ومثل كلمة خبيثة كشجرة خبيثة اجنتت من فوق الارض
مالها من قرار

“Seest thou not how Allah sets forth a parable? A goodly word like a goodly tree whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches reach the heavens. (Verse 24)... And the parable of an evil word is that of any evil tree: it is torn up by the root from the surface of the earth: it has no stability”. (Verse 26).

3.2.3 Monetary Rewards

Salary and wages are the most important and common types of motives for satisfying the material needs of employees. Islam strongly recommends that workers should be given adequate and reasonable wages for their work, keeping in view the quality and quantity of work, their needs and requirements, and the overall economic conditions of the society. Islam strictly prohibits coercion and forced labor. Rather, it directs that full compensation should be given to workers for their work without any reductions. Prophet Muhammad s.a.w said:

“Allah says that I will act as a plaintiff, on the Day of Judgment against the person who engages some worker on work and takes full work from him but does not give him (full) wages”. (Hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari)

3.2.4 Brotherly Treatment of Workers

All men are created equal with each other. The only thing that differs is obedience towards Allah. Islam offers a unique and noble concept of labour-management relations. The fundamental principle of Islam is that all human beings are brothers to each other. The superior-subordinate relations have been created by Allah only for running the affairs of human life in a smooth and efficient manner; otherwise the subordinate worker has the same human dignity and worth, as the person under whose authority he is working.

Islam regards human beings as the servants of Allah s.w.t., descendants from Adam and Eve, and therefore, they are each others' brothers. When this is applied, equal brotherly treatment applies.

3.2.5 As-Syura (Mutual Consultation)

Most Muslim organizations have failed to practice the real concept of syura in their decision-making. Syura in fact, can boost the workers' motivation by giving them the opportunity to express their views and opinions in the organization's decision-making. The Holy Prophet consulted his companions over all serious matters, military and otherwise. His companions did not hesitate to counsel the Prophet, even sometimes against his own wisdom. Still, taking a lesson from this magnanimous attitude of the Prophet, we should be prepared to look for new ideas and to benefit from fresh experiences.

.....وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ.....

“.....and their affairs are a matter of mutual consultations among themselves
“ (Asy-Syura: 38)

4.0 COMPARISON BETWEEN WESTERN AND ISLAMIC WORK MOTIVATION

The comparison will be in terms of the differences and similarities between the two prevailing perspectives, the specific areas involved will be definitions, rewards/appraisals and punishments, evaluation of theories, framework and the implication of Western and Islamic work motivation to management. This is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis between Western and Islamic Work Motivation

NO	ASPECTS OF COMPARISON	DIFFERENCES		SIMILARITIES
		WESTERN	MUSLIM / ISLAM	
1	Definitions	Straightforward comprising the elements and characteristics of work motivation Monetary rewards	No definite and precise definitions	Incentives given to the employees to increase the organization's productivity and work performance
2	Rewards/Appraisals and Punishments	Punishments are in terms of restructuring and transfer of staff	Spiritual and encouragement Punishments are reserved in the Hereafter	Rewards covering both monetary and spiritual to boost the responsibilities of the employees
3	Evaluation of theories	Emphasizes more the self-fulfillment, severe punishment to stimulate employees and specify what the employees goals should be to make them motivated	Emphasizes on the intentionalism of an ethic of action	An ultimate goal to be achieved by creating a fair chance and administrative channels of communication
4	Implications for the Management	Job enrichments and self fulfillment are important for effective work productivity	Work is an ibadah and whatever action possessed by the employees depends on niyyah (intention)	Specified goals penetrated within the inner self of employees so as to boost work performance and productivity

From the table above, we can summarize that the Western perspectives are emphasizing the fulfillment of monetary rewards to enhance work productivity but Islamic perspectives believe in spiritual rewards as work is considered an Ibadah towards Allah the Almighty.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, a few recommendations are brought forward, particularly for those who may benefit from the combination of Western and Islamic work motivation, as well as topics for further research.

5.1 Policy Makers

These groups are the ones who initiate a means to an end, alternative solutions to problems and are the 'key producers' of the success of an organization. In the public service, they will influence the process of policy making. In terms of the adaptability of Islamic motivation as well as its practicality, it is suggested that our government should come out with the idea of policy making that emphasizes the combination of Western and Islamic motivation to create what Ibn Khaldun termed "the knowledge culture". Both the policy makers and the public service in a government must be held responsible for taking up the challenge of the knowledge culture by means of having collective musyawarah to achieve satisfying results.

5.2 Managers

Managers are the ones who are directly involved in supervision and boosting motivation for the employees. Their kinds of working conditions require them to have a vision and goal so as to achieve a satisfying result. With an emphasis on the motivating factors in their organizations, managers are able to accomplish their daily responsibilities with high spirit and self esteem. With a combination of physical rewards (Western) and spiritual rewards (Islamic) in themselves, the managers will become more answerable and in one way or another this will drive them to excellent job performance.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

One of the most important aspects is the implementation of syura (mutual consensus) in an organization. The term syura is derived from statements made by the Arabs, namely: "syurtu al dabbah wa syawwar tuha" and syurtu al asal wasyartuh". From here, the term 'al istisyyarah" (discussion/meeting to find solutions for problem) is put into practice. This is what is called participative management or in Islam, syura. It is only through such a process that the leader can build a strong team based on the values of mutual respect for all individuals.

With this keyword, as stated in Surah 42, Al-Syura, verse 38, it is an ideal way in which a good administrator should conduct his affairs, so that, on the one hand, he may not become too egotistical and on the other he may not lightly abandon the responsibilities which devolve on him as a personality whose development counts in the sight of Allah s.w.t.

Conduct in life is open and determined by this mutual consultation between those who are entitled to give out opinions, namely in private affairs, business, between partners and parties interested, the rulers and the ruled and different departments of administration. Therefore, how can syura be implemented in organizations in Malaysia? These will be the questions for the writer to answer in further research.

Another important topic to be considered is organizational conflict. As specified by Bhadaraz (in Shafie & Affandi, 1991), "If there is a single phenomenon of organization life which seems to be ubiquitous, it is the phenomenon of conflict". Conflict might occur between an individual with another individual, organization and other external factors. Still, it is mandatory for the organization to come out with proper resolutions to this problem. Whether the conflict can be settled via counseling, a scientific approach, a political approach, etc, is yet to be explored fully.

Hence, as a concluding remark, motivation includes both the appeal of reward and the fear of punishment for people who will act out of fear and/or out of hope. Rewards should be used more than punishment because the tendency to punish should be balanced by forgiveness, further, it is the fear of punishment itself, that increases motivation. Punishment is a rather disciplinary measure. Spiritual methods SHOULD become the first basis for effective motivation and justice, as well as the cornerstone of workers' satisfaction. Wallahu 'alam!

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