

# **THE RELEVANCE OF ISLAMIC VALUES FOR ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

- Today, most social tasks are done in and by organisations.
  - Examples:
    - government agencies (e.g. JKR)
    - business enterprises
    - non-governmental organisations
- An organisation is a social entity that has a collective goal and is linked to an external environment.

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- ❑ Organisations are human-made institutions which outline their purposes, structures and functions.
  - ❑ Organisations are normally effective because they concentrate on single tasks and every individual in the organisation must work closely to achieve the target of the organisation.
  - ❑ In line with this spirit of societal nature, organisations should be guided by values for effective performance by all individual members.

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- ▣ Values are something that an individual firmly believe in and individuals of the organisation and society have affective regard for. In the context of our discussion, they are principles or standards.
  - ▣ In order to have an in-depth understanding about values, one has to relate values to the ideological belief of the individual and society that they are based upon.

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- ❑ For the purpose of the current discussion, values will be deliberated based on the Islamic perspective as JKR employees are predominantly Muslims.
  - ❑ Before proceeding our discussion of values from the Islamic perspective, let us understand how the secular ideologies of Capitalism and Marxism influence the practice of values in societies.



## **2. SECULAR IDEOLOGIES OF CAPITALISM AND MARXISM**



# A. CAPITALISM

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- Philosophically, Capitalism is based on:
  - Materialism (Man is an economic being);
  - Individualism (Man, at the same time, is an individual being. Individual greed is the motivational factor for attaining economic success); and,
  - Naturalism.
- Its worldview is that life is to devote for material advancement and pleasure (Hedonism).
- Ethically, capitalism is based on the utilitarian principle—pleasure exceeds pain, i.e. one has to be calculative in one's relationship with others.
- To support ideological philosophy, economic life is organised along the spirit of *laissez faire*.

## **B. MARXISM**

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- ❑ Philosophically, Marxism is based on the following:
  - Materialism; and,
  - Collectivism.
- ❑ Man is a material and collective being at the same time.
- ❑ Its worldview is in the realm of material factor and it determines all aspects of social lives.
- ❑ The freedom of an individual is marginalised and everything has to be determined by the central authority.
- ❑ The practice of values by individuals in an organisation and society will be influenced by these ideological beliefs.



## **3. THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW**

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The Islamic worldview provides a guideline for society to organise. This requires Muslims to be proactive in leading their lives individually and collectively. The following gives a clear perspective about the Islamic worldview:

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- A. The Islamic worldview is based on the concept of tawhid which is a network:
- a) interrelating the concepts of God;
  - b) of humanity;
  - c) of man's relationship with God;
  - d) of man's position and role in the universe; and,
  - e) man's relationship with other fellow men.

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- B. In the Qur'an, the main subject that is deliberated is man—how he can achieve happiness, and the stages through which he passes in his lifetime. Islam holds man to be innocent, created in the best of forms, higher than the angels, and commissioned with the task of cosmic significance, namely to carry out Allah's Will on earth, that is, to realise the absolute in this space and time.

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- C. The Holy Qur'an has pronounced all mankind as one and compared it to a single organic entity in which the individual can neither do without the society nor vice versa. Each is essential to the other. This unitary view provides a dynamic direction to all spheres of human activities.

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The Qur'an also teaches us that man's sociality is embedded within his natural disposition. The Qur'an states as follows:

***"O people! We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, so that you might know one another. Truly, the dearest among you to God is the most pious." (Qur'an 49:13)***



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D. Islam enjoins that the stability of the whole is contingent upon both the material and spiritual well-being of man. It regards both aspects as integrated in a uniting form in every act and requirement of man as opposed to the material dominance of the secular ideology.

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E. Islam regards the life of man as one and indivisible. Man has to be an individual and collective entity at the same time.

The ability to harmonise these functions are very important.

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F. Islam is revealed with a particular definite purpose. According to Shah Waliullah, a great Muslim scholar of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, "the purpose of Islam is to purify the inner life of man and to make him realise the Divine Will by creating an order society wherein man is able to develop his potentialities to the fullest."

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G. The Islamic law, the **Shariah**, which governs the social order, is a system of social control established for the purpose of maintaining an ordered society among men. It indicates the right path to follow in order to arrive at the ideal life. It defines the individual and collective responsibilities in a harmonious, just and dynamic manner, based on an explicit orientation of society toward Allah.

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H. Islam prescribes that human beings organise collectively on values of truth, justice and brotherhood, the spirit derived from Divine revelation. Such values need to be reaffirmed in reorganising the present human organisation and society.

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- I. The accomplishment of this Islamic order demands that the principle of justice be manifested in the spirit of the overall operation of the system, be it in the organisation or society.



## **4. THE ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS**

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- ❑ The first part of the Islamic creed (*Kalimah Shahadah*) simply states that, “There is no object of worship except the One and Only God.”
- ❑ Philosophically, it looks at the worldly life from a holistic perspective whereby all dimensions of human requirements have to be fulfilled in an integrated form. These include the spiritual and material needs.
- ❑ At the same time, it considers man as both an individual and a social being. Thus, it harmonises the roles of both the individual and society.



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- It insists that social arrangement be organised along the principle of *al-adl wal ihsan* (justice and brotherhood).
  - The Qur'an 16:90:
    - "God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition."



## **5. CATEGORY OF VALUES**

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- Values can be divided into:
  - **Personal values**
    - E.g. : truthfulness, integrity, sincerity, fairness, honesty, cleanliness, etc.
  - **Organisation values**
    - E.g.: trust, caring, tolerance, teamwork, openness, forgiveness, etc.
  - **Work values**
    - E.g.: discipline, effectiveness, reliability, creativity, timeliness, conscientiousness, perseverance, etc.
- Thus, such values will have to be realised by an individual based on the Islamic faith.



## **6. WHY ARE ISLAMIC VALUES UNIVERSAL?**

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- In Islam, the nature of man (spiritual and material, and individual and social being) does not change despite the process of modernisation.
- With this perspective Islam holds the Divine values for man as universally true and relevant and are neither relative to time nor place. They are meant to guide the unchanging nature of man to attain progress and success.
- Inculcating values in oneself is to develop character which are purposive, courageous, just and benevolent.
- An individual devoid of values will be groping in the dark and create great confusion in leading his life (e.g. the feeling of ANOMIE).



## **7. TOP MANAGEMENT MUST BE COMMITTED AND SUPPORTIVE OF ISLAMIC VALUES**

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- ❑ For Islamic values to be realised in the organisation, the principle of leadership by example is the starting point.
- ❑ Subordinates can easily adopt Islamic values through good examples shown by the leadership.
- ❑ The importance of inculcating Islamic values in organisation policies and procedures can only be initiated by the top management.
- ❑ The success of the Prophet (pbuh), Khalifah al-Rashidin and Umar Abd Aziz in organising the nation then could be related to their leadership qualities of practising Islamic values entirely.



## **8. THE IMPORTANCE OF ISLAMIC VALUES TO ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE**



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- Being a navigational device for our lives, values definitely have a lot of influence on our attitudes and characters.
- Islamic values which are based on the four foundations, that are – *Taharah* (purification of the soul), *Ikbak* (subscribing to the truth), *Samahah* (forgiveness and tolerance), and *'Adalah* (justice) can contribute significantly to the development of right attitudes and characters.
- By adopting Islamic values, an individual will normally possess a dynamic attitude which include optimism, confidence and the willingness to seek for excellence in whatever he is doing.
- Similarly, by subscribing to Islamic values, one will normally possess good and responsible character.

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- Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) had said, "Verily Allah loves that when one of you does something, he does it perfectly." *Al-Baihaqi*
  - Yahya had related from Malik that he heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I was sent to perfect good character." *Al-Muwatta*
  - Yahya had related from Malik that Mu'adh ibn Jabal said, "The last advice the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave me when I put my foot in the stirrup was that he said, 'Make your character good for the people, Mu'adh' ibn Jabal!'

# QUOTATIONS

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## ■ Al-Ghazali:

- "Ethics (The branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct) can be defined as the knowledge of the soul, its properties and moral traits ... Ethics is the paramount practical science, for he who cannot manage or direct his soul will be ill-equipped to manage the affairs of others ... ethical enquiry should begin with the knowledge of the soul, its powers and properties. Such a knowledge is the precondition of cleansing the soul, as the Qur'an itself asserts: 'Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that corrupts it!' " (al-Shams: 9-10)

- Majid Fakry (1991): *Ethical Theories in Islam*

# QUOTATION

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- Susan Smith Kuczmarski & Thomas D. Kuczmarski, (1995) *Values-Based Leadership*
  - “The problems that plague society are mirrored in the workplace. The disintegration of the family unit and a corresponding erosion of values are paralleled by dysfunctional organizations.” This book provides a compelling argument: Employees need values they can believe in. Without a reason to believe that is based on a set of common organisational norms and values, profits and productivity will decline – and our country’s competitive position will erode.
  - A war needs to be waged, i.e. war for values and norms. Normfulness rather than normlessness should be the trophy to the victors. Organisations in America need norms and values that employees can embrace and embody. It is not an impossible task. In fact, we’ve found that it’s eminently manageable.”

# QUOTATION

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- Stephen Covey, (1992). *Principle-Centered Leadership*.
  - Correct principles are like compasses: they are always pointing the way. And if we know how to read them, we won't get lost, confused, or foolish by conflicting voices and values. Those who succeed are those who operate in harmony with correct principles. Those who recognise and live in harmony with basic principles such as fairness, equity, justice, integrity, honesty, and trust can lead a successful and progressive lives.

# QUOTATION

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- Francis Fukuyama (1995). *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*.
  - people who have to work together in an enterprise trust one another because “...if they are all operating according to a common set of ethical norms, doing business costs less. Such a society will be better able to innovate organizationally, since the high degree of trust will permit a wide variety of social relationships to emerge”.

# MATSUSHITA CORPORATION'S BUSINESS VALUES

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- Service to the Public: To provide high-quality goods and services at reasonable prices, thereby contributing to the well-being and happiness of people throughout the world;
- Fairness and Honesty: To be fair and honest in all business dealings and personal conduct, always making balanced judgements free of preconceptions;
- Teamwork for the Common Cause: To pool abilities and strength of resolution to accomplish shared objectives, in mutual trust and full recognition of individual autonomy;
- Untiring Effort for Improvement: To strive constantly for improvement of corporate and personal performances, even in the worst of adversities, so as to fulfill the firm's mission to realise lasting peace and prosperity; and,
- Courtesy and Humility: To always be cordial and modest and respect the rights and needs of others, thereby helping enrich the environment and maintain social order.

# MATSUSHITA CORPORATION'S BUSINESS VALUES

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- Two more items were added in 1937:
  - Accord with Natural Laws: To abide by the laws of nature and adjust thought and behavior to ever-changing conditions, so as to bring about gradual but steady progress and successes in all endeavors.
  - Gratitude for Blessings: To forever be grateful for all the blessings and kindness received, so as to live with peace, joy and strength and overcome any obstacles encountered in the pursuit of true happiness.

John P Kotter (1997). *Matsushita Leadership*.





## **9. CONCLUSION**

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- An organisation like JKR as a microcosm of society requires a strong value-practising society. Malaysians of late have become very secular-minded whose lives are solely devoted to material pursuits.
- Yet, at the same time, Muslims who have returned to Islam, are merely preoccupied with the rituals of the religion. Islam needs to be understood from its philosophical perspective for Muslims to relate the significance of practising values in all aspects of their activities, including their work performance.