

Symbiosis of Religious Principles and Basic Occupational Values on Islamic Work-Life Balance

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses some basic issues on work and life based on Islamic and non-religious principles. Work and life are inseparable facets of and for human existence. Work derives from the demands of life, and thus it becomes a responsibility for every individual person. The article attempts to relate some highlighted *Qur'anic* verses and *Hadith* with basic occupational values such as honesty, modesty and innovativeness, among others, at workplaces. In the end, it makes an effort to understand the working of the subconscious mind on work to make life worthwhile. The plan for this article is to lay emphasis that the presence of human beings, which includes their mind, energy and whatever they can offer in the forms of work, benefits all. In such a case, not only those humans may be seen as successful in fulfilling the work-needs, but also victorious in completing the life-demands as human beings. "Virtuous workplace" is the most ideal platform for such purpose.

Introduction

Islamic principles and basic occupational values reflect mutually advantageous associations. This symbiosis pattern reflects a durable association between knowledge, action and reaction in a working environment. The environment includes cultural, institutional, physical, and social components at workplaces. Workers are a group of people who obtain knowledge and skills in a particular work nature. With that, they act according to what they are expected to perform in work. And consequently, their reactions towards work expectation and demand relates directly to their social surroundings. Apparently, work environment influences choice, organisation, performance, and most importantly satisfaction in work.

Excerpt of the complaints extracted below reflect some un-Islamic reactions and interactions of the working environment, which are not representing the idealisation of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). In fact, when services were not produced as expected by those who are supposed to deliver them i.e. the officers/staffs of an organisation, it created unsatisfying feeling to those who requires the services i.e. the clients/public:

The Departments staff should be more polite when dealing with students; (IIUM has) close minded, bad administration staffs. Provide training for the staffs, as they are not student friendly and always trouble the students; Improve the way the staff works so that way they would be more organized; Staff should be more service oriented; The staff should improve their skill to attend students' needs; They should be friendlier to students; The staff must be always smile and friendly; They (staff) should make the students feel welcome to stop by; Staff should be friendlier with students and provide better services-more efficient; The staff should be more friendly and patient with students' attitude; The staff should more polite. Should adapt "Budi Bahasa Budaya Kita" in each staffs culture; Need to be professional when handling things; Staffs need to be disciplined; Staff should always be friendly and help students' issues with enthusiasm; All staff should be more friendly and more open in accepting the comments of all students (IIUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011)

Following to the above excerpt, the subsequent discussions deliberates some sociological analysis within the parameter of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) for ideal ways in managing the issues of occupational values at workplaces. The following are CAOT's lists of occupational values and beliefs². These includes that 1) Every person has intrinsic dignity and worth; 2) Every person is unique; 3)

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²CAOT, 2007; 3-4

Every person has the right to make choices about life; 4) Every person has the right to self-determination; 5) People have some ability to participate in occupations; 6) People have some potential to change; 7) People are social and spiritual beings; 8) People have diverse abilities for participating in occupations; 9) People shape and are shaped by their environments. Throughout the discussion, the inclusion of incidents from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* are fundamental (whenever necessary). For such attempts, this article extorts some illustrations from the *Qur'anic* verses of well-renowned translation effort of the Holy *Qur'an* by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1994) and a compilation of *Hadith* from SahihBukhariby Al-Imam Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Abdul-LateefAz-Zubaidi (1994).

The plan for this article is therefore, firstly, to extract some *Qur'anic* verses and *Hadiths* within the scope of work environment and its related social surroundings. Secondly, it aspires to advocates ideal ways in dealing the issues of occupational values at work environment. Thirdly, this article attempts to promote "virtuous workplace" as a new concept of an ideal working environment.

Please bear in mind that neither the *Qur'an* nor *Hadith* is an occupational or career guide book that give specific classification to the world of work. Instead they just act to provide the basic and general outlines of the healthy way of life connected with the life to come. In this light, the general guidance expounded in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* shows that work is the criteria that distinguish human beings. As much as it can, this article attempts to extract the best possible *Qur'anic* verses as well as authentic *Hadiths* that supports relevant occupational values at the working environment. Aspects particularly related to human and social actions and reactions are very much concerned here.

Work Environment

Knowledge, action and reactions are components of ethical values. Ismail Raji al Faruqi³ in his classic book on work entitles *Towards Islamic Labour and Unionism* wrote the creation of human kind in the universe is to actualise the ethical values in their work, as "work is not only honorable (but) it is (also) worship"⁴ Allah proclaimed that *people who work righteously are those who have faith in Him*⁵.

Humans as workers

Humans are occupational beings. Every worker is responsible for their work. Allah has expressly warned, *You will surely be held responsible for every work you have done*⁶. Work in Islam is a way to earn livelihood by developing the earth for the benefit of human beings.

Due to the difference of cultures, places and situations, work is not limited to specific job career, except on the basis of being good work or bad work. A good work is a productive job career which is in line with the teachings of The Holy *Qur'an*. On the other hand, a bad work is the job career which not only contradicts the *Qur'anic* teachings but also has no benefits to human beings nor it is in line with human ethics.

Occupational Values and Work-Life Balance

Values are concepts which are appreciated in a particular society, such as good, right, fair, and just. The kinds of values that one holds influence whatever decision she/he make in life. A person's individual values are the most important elements in her/his belief system. This is because values act as a scanner that sieves and receives life elements. Values therefore reflect one's conviction, beliefs and deeds derived from the social guides and norms accepted and expected from her/his social and cultural environment. Concisely, values are subconscious ingredients of what a person is.

Eminent sociologists such as Robert K. Merton⁷ and Talcott Parsons⁸ suggested that the most important values in American society are wealth, success, power and hard work. Occupational values are thus

³Ismail, 1980; 11

⁴Ibid; 12

⁵The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 41:33

⁶The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 5:1; 17:35-36

⁷Sztompka, 2003

⁸Staubmann and Lidz, 2009

conceptualised as an individual's evaluation of the importance of activities and work characteristics⁹. According to Erlandsson, Eklund and Persson¹⁰, the perceived meaning of occupational values constitute of ethical principles that individuals hold while working. In particular, the occupational values such as politeness, discipline, professional, organised, friendly, efficient, honest, modesty, innovative are among relevant and fundamental values in an organisation that offers services.

Human values are extremely important in work dealings. This socio-ethical reaction and interaction of human life makes a person either a good or bad worker. Within the working context, workers reactions towards their supervisors, co-workers and subordinates and other actors in their social surroundings are extremely of great consequence. For every individual has the right to be treated justly and fairly.

Symbiosis of Islamic Principles and Basic Occupational Values on Work-Life Balance

There are varieties of rules in society – some are manifested explicitly via means like written rules but some are implicit such as social norms. In the workplace there are established rules of occupational values as well. For example, if a worker fails to come to work, she/he is likely to be fired by the organisation. For the most part, most workers have grasped those rules, but it tends to be the unspoken, often unwritten rules of behaviour that cause the most problems in the workplaces.

Work from Sociological, Islamic and non-Islamic Perspectives

As work gives meaning to life, this article in its modest attempt suggests that work environment must inculcate the particular occupational values and attitudes that benefit everyone who are involved at work. Work is fundamental in human life.

The Islamic work environment emphasises ethics and culture that include *aqeedah, da'wah, akhlaq* and emotion. Islam requires and entrusted "work" for every individual. When a person is carrying out her/his "work", it means that she/he is fulfilling the *amaanah* (or trust) of Allah. Indeed, according to Islam, work is worship if done for Allah. In the The Holy *Qur'an* Allah says, *I have only created jinns and men that they may serve Me. No sustenance do I require of them, nor do I require that they should feed Me*¹¹. Perhaps based on the various religious verses on work context propagated in Islam, many Western thinkers adopted its idealisation in their philosophy.

For instance, Max Weber¹² in his famous classic book on work *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* had elaborated that the work consists of religious elements that have been used as a foundation to achieve success in life. He stressed that the success of Protestant in economic and work activity is caused by the teachings found in Protestant denominations.

Schwartz¹³ (1992) has defined values as beliefs which are enduring and almost unchanged that provide life principles to an individual. This is because value systems tend to form early in life and are very stable in penetrating and acculturating individuals. Within the context of work, occupational values engage respectful actions and reactions in the work environment.

Dhaouadi¹⁴ regarded IbnKhalidun as the founding father of Eastern Sociology who understood the significance of work from the socio-geographic perspective. According to IbnKhalidun¹⁵, individuals met and encountered with each other. He saw society as having gone through the wholesome development process. With them, they brought particular skills, tools and crafts to work in developing a 'town' or "city-state". The city flourished, the people are enriched, and the work becomes more demanding. This "city-state" development claimed a particular group of workers whose values are excellent for human sustenance.

In a smaller scale, this "city-state" equals to an organisation. It should have an organised management structure. Criticism against an organisation to *improve the way the staff works so that way they would be*

⁹Rokeach, 1973; Sager, 1999; 197-211

¹⁰Erlandsson, Eklund and Persson, 2011

¹¹The Holy *Qur'an*, 1994, 51:56

¹²Weber, 1958

¹³Schwartz, 1992

¹⁴Dhaouadi, 1990

¹⁵Ibid

more **organized** (*author's highlight) (IIUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011) gives the impression that the working environment of that organisation is still below expectation and thus requires positive changes. Moreover, criticism that (IIUM has) *close minded, bad administration staffs* (IIUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011) may lead to negative image to the institution. Positive changes to bring good image must come from various levels of organisational structure. Regardless whether a person is at the top, middle or low levels; either a person is the officer or clients/customers; whether a person a superior or inferior grades, occupational values of the working environment shall be maintained. One foremost value is respecting each other.

According to the occupational values and belief promoted by CAOT¹⁶, **1) Every person has intrinsic dignity and worth.** Authenticated *Hadiths* illustrated the most ideal demonstration of such aspect in social affairs. The Prophet SAW was neither a person who speaks bad words nor the one who speaks obscene, evil words to people. In relation to the excerpt presented, there is also a suggestion to better improve actions and reactions in the working environment. One of them is being polite.

*The staff should more polite. Should adapt "Budi Bahasa Budaya Kita" in each staffs culture, The Department staff should be more polite when dealing with students (*author's highlight) (IIUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011)*

Narrated by Anasibn Malik R.A, the Prophet Muhammad SAW said, *Neither a sabbab (one who would abuse others nor fahish (one who speaks bad words), nor the one who curses (others). And if he wanted to admonish anyone of us, he used to say, "what is wrong with him", his forehead be dusted!*¹⁷ Another *Hadith* narrated by Jabir R.A who said *never was the Prophet SAW was asked for a thing to be given for which his answer was No!*¹⁸ In addition, another *Hadith* narrated by Anas R.A who said, *I served the Prophet SAW for ten years, and he never said to me Uff (a minor harsh word denoting impatience) and never blamed me by saying Why did you do so or why didn't you do so?*¹⁹

Workers must be careful in words and actions that may harm or offend colleagues. If there are differences of opinion, they should resolve the matter with the most good and meek way. Posing the opinion should occur in a consultative approach rather than debate. If these disagreements occur, the solution can be exemplified from the following *Qur'anic* verse. Allah says, *The Believers are but a single Brotherhood, so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers, and fear God, that ye may receive Mercy*²⁰.

Every argument even slightly can cause a bad outcome. The following verse explains clearly about non-disparaging, insulting and abusing others. Allah mentions, *O ye who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former). Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former). Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames; ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness (to be used of one) after he has believed: And those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong*²¹. Insults include laughing at someone in public, cynical smiles, verbal insults in the form of jokes or long glances happens in the working environment. Such working environment does not show characteristic of a "virtuous workplace".

Other evil characters are jealousy and mutual estrangement. These un-Islamic characters are easily found at workplaces. Narrated by Anasibn Malik R.A. *the Prophet SAW said do not jealous one another, and do not desert each other, and O Allah's worshippers! Be brothers. Lo! It is not permissible for any to desert (not to talk to) his brother (Muslim) for more than three days*²². In addition, a *Hadith* narrated by Abu Huraira R.A. *the Prophet SAW said beware of suspicious, for suspicious is the worst of false tales, and do not look for the other's faults and do not spy, and do not be jealous of one another, and do not desert (cut relationship with) one another, and do not hate one another, and O Allah's worshippers! Be brothers (as Allah has ordered you)*²³. The envious and jealous feeling leads to another bad behaviour that is slandering others. These sins destroy the relationship between other social beings. Allah says, *You who believe, refrain from conjecturing too much; even a little suspicious forms a vice. Do not spy on one another nor let any of you back-bite*

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Sahih Bukhari, 1994, No. 2027

¹⁸ Sahih Bukhari, 1994, No. 2028

¹⁹ Sahih Bukhari, 1994, No. 2029

²⁰ The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 49: 10

²¹ The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 49: 11

²² Sahih Bukhari, 1994, No. 2034

²³ Sahih Bukhari, 1994, No. 2035

others. *Would one of you like to eat his dead brother's flesh? You would loathe it! Heed Allah, for Allah is Relenting Merciful*²⁴. The slanderer is the one who tells untrue stories about someone in order to harm her/his good name. The environment of *ukhuwwah* is at lost.

Therefore, one who considers working within the shadow of Islam and shari'ah must adopt a cautious strategy in dealing with other people. It includes not getting angry. As narrated by Abu Huraira R.A., the Prophet Muhammad SAW said, *The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger*²⁵. Additionally, Abu Huraira R.A. also cited that *A man said to the Prophet Muhammad SAW "advise me". The Prophet SAW said, Do not become angry and furious. The man asked (the same) again and again, and the Prophet SAW said in each case, do not become angry and furious*²⁶. Regarding to that, a *Hadith* narrated by 'Aisha R.A. the *Prophet SAW said, the most hated person to Allah is the most quarrelsome person of the opponents.*

Anger and fury are definitely evil characters in any organisational sector. There are many instances in the Islamic history that cited those characters which lead to oppressions. A *Hadith* narrated by Abu Bakra R.A. that, *he heard Prophet Muhammad SAW said, A judge should not make a judgement between two persons when he is in anger*²⁷. Working in an anger and temperamental state loses one's rationality. A boss or superior for example must realise the fact that Allah has created human beings by their different capabilities, capacities, interests and uniqueness.

CAOT also include that **2) Every person is unique**. Allah has distributed distinctive human skills and talents. One worker may be more inclined towards cognitive components; others are more interested in affective component; while the rest are engrossed in behavioural components. Mutual benefits and group prosperity cannot be realised without diversification of talents and needs. These diversifications complements each other.

Every human therefore may fulfil the function for which she/he is best fitted. Allah says, *Do not envy the way Allah has made some of you excel over others, men should have a portion of whatever they have earned, while women should have a portion of whatever they have earned. Ask Allah for some of His Bounty; Allah is aware of everything*²⁸ signifies the differences a person has, but the reward she/he receives is never insufficient.

Realising talent differences, CAOT identifies that **3) Every person has the right to make choices about life**. Islam teaches that human beings are free to choose any work which they please. For all productive work falls under Islamic work ethic, regardless whether the work is employed by others or self-employed. In consequence, Islam disclaims any discrimination of employment. Within the same breath, Islam also maintains that the workers need to be steadfast in whatever work they do. They need to respect the responsibilities as stipulated that come by their choice of work, or else they will oppress those who depends on them. Excerpts that mention, *staffs need to be disciplined* (*author's highlight) and the *need to be professional when handling things* (*author's highlight) (IUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011) reflect imbalance between the idyllic of work and how it is delivered. One clear solution is that there should be a clear assertion that the production and consumption of goods and services are to benefit all human beings. Being discipline and professional are important Islamic occupational values that rallies with the freedom given. Allah promised that, *Every man receives only what he makes an effort for*²⁹.

Whether a person choose to be a trader or leader or politician, she/he must ensure that she/he deliver her/his work responsibly and with discipline and professional. According to Prophet Muhammad SAW, *Every one of you is a shepherd whose responsible for his flock, the domestic servant whose charge is his master's household, the leader whose charge is his fellow human beings. The latter is the carrier of the heaviest burden.* Carelessly to be indisciplined and irresponsible leads to oppressing others.

Oppression is an evil deed. A *Hadith* narrated by Abu Huraira R.A who reported that Prophet SAW said, *Whoever has oppressed another person concerning his reputation or anything else, he should beg him to*

²⁴The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 49:12

²⁵SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2041

²⁶SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2042

²⁷SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2204

²⁸The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 4:32

²⁹The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 99:7-8; 53:39

*forgive him before the Day of Resurrection when there will be no money (to compensate for the wrong deeds), but if he has good deeds, those good deeds will be taken from him according to his oppression which he has done, and if he has no good deeds, the sins of the oppressed person will be led on him*³⁰.

Allah has earnestly warned people that whoever puts people into troubles and difficulties will be put into troubles and difficulties by Allah. A clear *Hadith* related to this incident is narrated by Jundab (TarifAbiTamima) R.A. that he heard the Prophet SAW said, *Whoever does a good deed in order to show off, Allah will never expose his intentions on the Day of Resurrection (before the people), and whoever puts the people into difficulties, Allah will put him into difficulties on the Day of Resurrection. The people said (to Jundab R.A) advise us. He said, the first thing of the human body to be putrefy is the abdomen, so he who can eat nothing but good food (Halal and earned lawfully) should do so, and he who does as much as he can that nothing intervene between him and Paradise by not shedding even a handful of blood (i.e. murdering) should do so*³¹.

The tendency to oppress people is always there at workplaces. For that reason, some organisations underlines standards of value, which include how to conduct personal behaviours at work, how to deal with other co-workers, how sources and resources are utilised and how decisions are made at the management level. The presence of this standard of value is to ensure that everyone receives a fair and kind dealing. 'Aisha R.A narrated that Prophet Muhammad SAW said, *Be calm, O 'Aisha! Allah loves that. One should be kind and lenient in all matters*³².

Fair and kind dealings are significant in working environment since according to COAT**4) Every person has the right to self-determination**. Clearly persons may have specific human motivation and personality that concerns with their inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs. However, their determination must be consistent with the choices made by their organisation. As Allah says, *Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer, who (conduct) their regular affairs by mutual Consultations, who spends out of what We bestow them for Sustenance*³³.

Mutual consultations or *shuura* are indeed relevant in today's organisational structure. A worker may don a self-determined personality, but she/he could not be independently away or cut herself/himself from the whole structure of organisation, as long as she/he is a member of that organisation. Indeed, a *Hadith* narrated by Jubairibn Mut'im R.A. that he heard the Prophet SAW said, *Al-Qati' (person who severs the bond of the kinship) will not enter Paradise*³⁴. Another *hadith* narrated by Abu Huraira R.A., that *the Prophet SAW said the word 'Ar-rahm (womb) derives its name from ar-Rahman (one name of Allah) and Allah said, I will keep good relation with you (womb i.e. kith and kin) and sever the relation with him who will sever the relation with you (womb i.e. kith and kin)*³⁵ show that Allah will keep good relations with the one who will keep good relations³⁶ with his relative and other social beings. Islam genuinely stresses on having good relationship.

The relationships at the workplace must be based on *amaanah* and respect. Evidently in every organisation, a worker does the work duties which are necessary for the welfare of the group. A complaint that *staff should be more service-oriented* (*author's highlight) (IIUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011) gives an impression that the service given was not up to expectation. This should not be happening because Allah has repeatedly said that He assigned human beings to different work positions in life, so that each human does the righteous deed within her/his positional status. The *Qur'an* says: *Every individual is pledged for what he does*³⁷.

If however, a worker is not able to fulfil her/his duties, the organisation must inspect the matter thoroughly. There are many angles to look into this issue. Laziness or putting any other individual at fault is not necessarily the answer to the issue. Perhaps, the organisation itself fails to provide a working environment that is conducive to workers. This is parallel to COAT's guideline that **5) Every person has some ability to**

³⁰SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 1118

³¹SahihBukhari, No. 2203, 1994

³²SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2025

³³The Holy Qur'an 42:38

³⁴SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2009

³⁵SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2010

³⁶ Good relation here means a) to visit them; b) to help them financially; and 3) to speak good words with (to) them.

³⁷The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 52:21

participate in occupations. Islam truly believes that human beings are a responsible creature. The Holy *Qur'an* teaches that, *No soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns*³⁸, and Allah has taught us to pray to Him, *Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear*³⁹. The very verse unmistakably connotes the magnitude of human capabilities and human responsibilities.

Of all the wonderful aspects of human creation, humans also inherited deficient facets. Allah criticises His creation that *We already beforehand, taken the covenant of Adam, but her forgot, and We found on his part no firm resolve*⁴⁰. The *Qur'anic* verse highlights the nature of humans as a forgetful kind. The term "forgetfulness" and its different forms are mentioned forty two times in the *Qur'an*. Forgetfulness refers to the failure to remember or lack of awareness or attentiveness or the inability to recall a particular piece of information accurately. Forgetfulness is undeniably a human weakness. If Allah gives "forgetfulness" to His creation, it is because He knows that forgetting is sometime needed in human life. To forget sad events, mistakes or any other difficulties of life are important in one's life, or else it can instigate troubles if she/he cannot forget.

But at the same time, the other way to look at this weak disposition of human beings, following to COAT is **6) Every person has some potential to change.** A complain such *the staff should improve their skill to attend to students' needs (*author's highlight)* (IUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011) can be a reminder that workers in an organisation must strive to improve their situation better. Allah asserted that *And say, Work (righteousness), soon will God observe your work, and His Apostle and the Believers. Soon will ye be brought back to the Knower of what is hidden and what is open, then will He show you the truth of all that ye did*⁴¹. Improving one's working style, including the way one act and interacts are significant in the working environment.

This is because, as COAT cites that **7) Every person has social and spiritual beings.** In Islam, the natural condition of human beings precedes any social arrangement and structure. Allah says, *We created man from dry clay, from black moulded loam, and before him the jinn from the fire of scorching wind. Behold! Your Lord said to the angels, I am creating man from dry clay, from black moulded loam. When I fashioned him and breathed of My Spirit into him, fall ye down in obeisance unto Him*⁴². Clearly, human beings are created by Allah to live their life according to the mission and duty ordained by the Almighty. According to Prof. Dr. Muhammaad Naquib Al-Attas⁴³ *"Man has a dual nature, he is both body and soul, he is once physical being and spirit"*. Seemingly, the social and spiritual entities of human beings are embraced by the subconscious and conscious mind. The former accepts any possibilities of life, which only later is filtered by the latter.

Similarly in working environment, undoubtedly every worker must have mixed thoughts about life – doing good things, committing bad things – but the wise workers eventually will be conscious on what is appropriate for them and just for others. A *Hadith* of Prophet Muhammad SAW, narrated by An-Nu'man Bashir R.A who said, *You see believers as regards their being merciful among themselves and showing love among themselves and be kind among themselves resembling one body, so that, if any part of the body is not well then the whole body is shares the sleeplessness and fever*⁴⁴. That particular *Hadith* denotes that personal values and organisational values is a two-way process. As social quality spread over, the spiritual entity embeds in.

Personal values have a significant impact if it is in line with the values of the organisation. Sometimes the atmosphere can be quite difficult when individuals feel their personal values are in conflict with the values of the organisation. For example a worker may face conflict of values if she/he works with a boss or work in an organisation that has different ideologies or principles.

One needs to understand that **8) Every person has diverse abilities for participating in occupations,** as COAT rightfully pointed out too. The annual appraisal of the organisation may be the means to find and fine-tune the workers' different abilities. This practice is often used by the Japanese companies. Since they place

³⁸The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 2:286

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 20:115

⁴¹ The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 9:105

⁴²The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 15:26-29

⁴³Al-Attas, 1990;143

⁴⁴SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2018

loyalty as one of their paramount occupational values⁴⁵, the Japanese management often best-match their workers based on workers' personality formation and ability fitness. The system seems to integrate the wholeness of knowledge, skills and traits. It is about integrity, which means staying true to the principles of honesty and high moral principles⁴⁶. At the individual level, integrity is the consistency between what is said with action sunder taken. It includes coordination between the action and the morality, ethics and law as well as the alignment between personal interests and the public interest. At the organisational level, integrity includes the implementation of a code of ethics, customer charter, work systems and adherence to the best direction to protect the public interest without taking advantage of self-interest⁴⁷. Integrity is an important quality for organisations.

According to Syed Azauddin⁴⁸, integrity means dedication given by someone to do the job right. This principle is also the trust given by a leader to his subordinates to do something. Padhi and Palo⁴⁹ found that every person in an organisation shall receive humane treatment and be respected. Their views and concerns must be considered fairly without any prejudices. The incident was narrated by Ma'qilibnYasar R.A., who heard the Prophet SAW said, *Any man whom Allah has given the authority of ruling some people and he does not look after them in an honest manner, will never have even the smell of Paradise*⁵⁰.

Prejudice frequently transpires in organisations. If prejudicial account is committed by those at privileged positions onto the lower rank subordinates, the suffering will be immense. However, be warned as Prophet Muhammad SAW once said, as narrated by Hudhaifa R.A. *I heard the Prophet SAW said a qattat (a person who conveys disagreeable, false information from one person to another with the intention of causing harm and enmity between them) will not enter Paradise*⁵¹.

The privileged position has full of responsibilities. Followers must follow leaders, as narrated by Anasibn Malik R.A., Prophet Muhammad SAW said, *You should listen to and obey your Imam (Muslim ruler) even if he was an Ethiopian (black) slave whose head looks like a raisin*⁵². But, the leaders must have qualities of *amaanah* and wise. Allah says, *So the king said, bring him (Yusuf) unto me, I will take him specially to serve about my own person. Therefore when he had spoken to him, he said, be assured this day, thou art, before our own presence, with rank firmly established, and fidelity fully proved*⁵³. Many Islamic historical incidents showed that great leaders as exemplified by the leadership of Khulafa' Ar-Rasyiduun did not accept their leadership duty as self-privilege but more as self-sacrifice.

In any social environment**9) Every person is shaped by her/his environment.** It is also relevant for leadership aspect. The whole leadership system must always direct itself towards Islamic environment. Henceforth, it is the time to adopt the concept of "virtuous workplace" whereby work is not only to obtain monetary earning but more importantly a place to build a *halaal* life.

This "virtuous workplace" places a paramount care for human action and interaction in organisation. By having virtuous elements at the workplace means that the working environment is capable to bring in productivity in a diverse range. The environment irrespective of size contributes to each other in a substantial amount and helps in its social gathering. It is the workplace where organisation and workers understand each other in terms of professionalism, offers enough space to individual motivation and provide good communication and a healthy teamwork.

In a "virtuous workplace", workers uphold the ideals of the company. They work in teams and respect the input of their peers. They are always polite to each other and if there are disagreements they discuss and never attack each other. However, numerous complaints pointed the need for "virtuous workplace" by creating a nice and "friendlier" vibes to make people "feel welcome". It is about having good manner of social gathering:

⁴⁵ Wan, H.L., 2012

⁴⁶Oxford Dictionary, 1997

⁴⁷INTAN, 1991

⁴⁸Syed Azauddin Syed Bahaldin, 2005

⁴⁹Padhi and Palo, 2005

⁵⁰SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2201

⁵¹SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2032

⁵²SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2199

⁵³The Holy Qur'an, 1994, 12:54

*Provide training for the staffs, as they are not student **friendly** and always trouble the students; They should be **friendlier** to students; The staff must be always smile and **friendly**, Staff should be **friendlier** with students and provide better services-more efficient; The staff should be more **friendly** and patient with students' attitude; Staff should always be **friendly** and help students' issues with enthusiasm; All staff should be more **friendly** and more open in accepting the comments of all students (*author's highlight)(IIUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011)*

*They (staff) should make the students **feelwelcome** to stop by (*author's highlight) (IIUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011)*

In relation to the above situation, some relevant *Hadiths* highlight the etiquette of people in a gathering. Specifically, the situations are clearly mentioned in SahihBukhari, No. 2057, 2058 and 2059. In the first occasion, a small number of persons should greet the large number of person. Narrated by Abu Huraira R.A who said, *The Prophet SAW was cited the young should greet the old, the passerby should greet the sitting one, and the small group of persons should greet the large group of persons*⁵⁴. In the second situation, the walking person should greet the sitting one. Narrated by Abu Huraira R.A who said, *The Prophet SAW was cited the riding person should greet the walking one, and the walking one should greet the sitting one, and the small number of persons should greet the large group of persons*⁵⁵. In the third occasion, greeting must be given to those whom one knows and those whom one does not know. Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr R.A, *A man asked the Prophet SAW what sorts of deeds or traits of Islam are good? The Prophet SAW said to feed others and to greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know*⁵⁶. Such gatherings as cited in the Islamic history also includes the working environment.

Another important collection of *Hadiths* about good manners in the assemblies includes a narration by Ibn 'Umar R.A. that *a man should not make another man get up from his (the latter's) seat in (in a gathering) in order to sit there, but should make room and spread out*⁵⁷. In addition, Ibn 'Umar R.A. also narrated that *I saw Allah's Messenger SAW in the courtyard of the Kaa'ba in the ihtiba' posture putting his hand round his legs like this*⁵⁸. The manner of gathering is profoundly expressed with a clear purpose of adjoining good relationship in a social gathering between and among each other.

Truly enough, conducting a well-mannered social gathering in organisations is actually creating a "virtuous environment". Every workplace needs that!

"Virtuous Workplace" is the Ideal Platform for Work-Life Balance: A Conclusion

As manifested by Ismail Raji al Faruqi⁵⁹ there are three aspects of human creation. Firstly, the worship and believe in God. Secondly, the utilisation of the universe with the work and virtue. And thirdly, the establishment of history and civilisational knowledge for the universe to prosper. There are various values that one should hold to in carrying out these responsibilities of work. If one becomes aware of three aspects of the creation of humans, one within her/his subconscious mind will be able to perform work as expected from her/him.

Good practices in occupational values will help workers achieve the purpose and goals of their creation. It will make them excellent workers, not only because of their contribution to national development, but also because they manage to fulfil the purpose and goal of our human creation. This certainly demonstrates the justly balanced nature of Islam (or *al-Wasatiyyah*⁶⁰). Excerpts from the IIUM Alumni Tracer Study 2011 may contain un-Islamic reactions and interactions of the working environment that do not correspond to the idealisation of the IIUM's mission of Islamisation. For that matter, this article would like to suggest the implementation of having the "virtuous workplace".

⁵⁴SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2057

⁵⁵SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2058

⁵⁶SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2059

⁵⁷SahihBukhari, 1994, No. 2064

⁵⁸SahihBukhar, 1994, No. 2065

⁵⁹Ismail, 1980

⁶⁰Mohd Kamal Hassan, 2013

The “virtuous workplace” may be a new concept which seems to be very idealistic, but one must be very optimistic of it because the workplace after all is where a person spend most of her/his day times and receive earnings. Without a doubt, the workplace is an important determinant of health, well-being, and justice. As much time is dedicated at the workplace, it subconsciously organises human behaviour. In fact, the workplace has therapeutic potential where it can edify individual self-esteem.

In the nutshell, this article emphasises the presence of human beings – their mind, energy and whatever they can offer in the forms of work – must not only benefit them but also all concerned. If workers know of their purpose of life, not only they may be seen as successful in fulfilling the work-needs, but also victorious in completing the life-demands as human beings.

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