Measuring and validating Islamic work value constructs: An empirical exploration using Malaysian samples

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A B S T R A C T

While research on work values has generated considerable scholarly attention, research on religiously oriented values, particularly on Islamic work values, has remained relatively limited in the extant literature. This paper attempts to address this lacuna by empirically measuring and validating the constructs of Islamic work value. The study adopted sequential exploratory mixed methods in which a quantitative research method was employed subsequent to qualitative methods in order to validate the psychometric properties of the Islamic work values' instrument. This study qualitatively validates 25 constructs of the 56 Islamic work values initially identified; of these, 13 constructs were quantitatively validated. Thus, this novel research contributes by establishing 13 Islamic work values in the literature, as well as developing an appropriate methodology for measuring and validating such Islamic work values. Finally, this paper identifies the limits of this study and suggests the potential areas of further research.

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1. Introduction

Values in general have generated considerable interest among scholars in the past (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz et al., 2001), and there has been extensive research on diverse issues regarding values in various settings (Hofstede, 1980). Chatterjee and Pearson (2002) and Bartlett (2003), for example, have investigated values in an organizational context, while others, such as Schwartz (1994) and Parsons, Cable, and Wilkerson (1999), have examined values in cultural settings. However, there is a paucity of research pertaining to religious values in the extant literature. Because most values are universal in nature, it is difficult to identify values that are associated with a particular religion or group. Towards addressing this research lacuna, this study aims to identify the importance of the concept of Islamic work values (IWV) and to validate an instrument intended to measure the identified constructs. Specifically, the research objectives are (1) to identify the constructs of IWV, (2) to measure their constructs and (3) to validate the instruments for securing their reliability and validity.

Recently, understanding Islamic systems has received renewed importance following the rapid economic growth in many Islamic nations. The Islamic market is growing rapidly at the global level and is showing distinctive market characteristics (Hussain, 1998; Hodge, 2005), especially following wealth generation resulting in improved living standards in many Muslim countries. Consequently, a considerable amount of research has been undertaken in various areas, such as management of Islamic banking and finance. Although values have been the subject of extensive research internationally, work on Islamic values remains relatively unexplored in the literature.

The importance of religion as a determinant of work values has attracted some attention among scholars. Religion as a source of values can be understandably acceptable, as three-quarters of the world's population belong to a religion (Zuckerman, 2005).

Religious values in general are founded on the principles outlined in religious books (e.g., the Qur'an and Hadith (Prophet Muhammad's traditions) for Islam, the Bible for Christianity, the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) and Talmud for Judaism; Abdal-Haqq, 2002; Sanders, 2009). Several studies such as Arslan (2001) and Cukur, Guzman, and Carlo (2004) have addressed the issue pertaining to the influence of religion on values. Values are the guiding principle for human behavior and religion influences values in terms of transmitting some specific values and norms to its followers. Thus, religiously oriented values can have strong impact on the behavior of followers of religions.

2. Literature review

2.1. The concept of virtues in Islam

Islamic values relate to the concept of desirable virtues or qualities based on Islamic sources. According to Al-Attas (1994) and Ismail and

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Badron (2012) the Islamic framework is established on reason as verified by the revelation; thus, all virtues in Islam are religiously oriented. Religious virtues can be classified into two types: external and internal (Fakry, 1991; Sherif, 1975). External religious virtues pertain to the fulfillment of divine commandments, Islamic customs and Islamic habits, while internal virtues refer to the activities of the heart such as sincerity and truthfulness to oneself (Al-Attas, 1994). An eminent Islamic scholar by the name of Ibn Sadr al-Shirwani, who died around 1626/7 CE, defined the science of virtue as ethics and moral values or *akhlaq* in Arabic (Halstead, 2007). While virtues are ethical and moral values, morality, in contrast, is a good manner derived from Islamic teaching and instruction (Al-Kaysi, 1994). In his book on the theory of Muslim character, Al-Ghazali, a pronounced Muslim scholar who lived around the 11th century, interpreted good manners as possessing all of the good virtues (Al-Ammar, Ahmed, & Nordin, 2012).

2.2. Reviewing the Islamic sources on the work value constructs

Numerous Qur'anic verses and the Prophet's traditions have purported to command such good virtues and qualities as cleanliness, piety, benevolence, cooperation, consistency, consultation, equality, forgiveness, gratitude, justice, moderation, patience, transparency, trustworthiness and strength. The examples of Qur'anic references are presented in Table 1.

According to Ali (2005); Abu-Saad (1998); Alhabshi (1994); Al-Ammar et al. (2012) and Rafiki and Wahab (2014), some values, such as perfectionism, fairness, promise-keeping, responsibility, accountability, trustworthiness, benevolence, competence, capability, honesty, transparency, cleanliness, piety, cooperation, timeliness, punctuality and consultation were also found to have been directly stated in the Prophet's traditions. Examples of references to the Prophet's tradition are presented in Table 2.

Despite all of this, empirical studies on the constructs of IWV in the extant literature are still minimal. The difficulty of access to Islamic literature and management, and lack of empirical research on Islamic management studies, contribute to this paucity. Prior studies focusing on Islamic work values do exist, but they seem to be scattered across the literature and are also regarded as descriptive in nature (Kazmi, 2003; Mohamed, AbdulKarim, & Hussien, 2010).

Table 1
Qur'an reference of Islamic work value constructs.

Constructs	Sources found in Qur'an verses
Cleanliness	Al-Baqarah (2), verse 222
Piety	Al-Hujurat (49), verse 13
Benevolence	Al-Nahl (16), verse 90
Cooperation	Al-Maidah (5), verse 2; Al-Nisa (4), verse 85
Consistency	Al-Shura (42), verse 15
Consultation	Al-Shura (42), verse 38; Al-Qasas (28), verse 26–28
Equality	Al-Nisa (4), verse 58
Forgiveness	Al-Shura (42), verse 43
Gratitude	Al-Nahl (16), verse 114; Yunus (6), verse 17
Justice	Al-Hujurat (49), verse 9
Moderation	Al-Baqarah (2), verse 143
Patience	Al-Baqarah (2), verse 153; Hud (11), verse 11, 115
Transparency	Al-Baqarah (2), verse 282
Trustworthiness	Al-Baqarah (2), verse 188
Strength	Al-Qasas (28), verse 26
Moderation	Al-Furqan (25), verse 67
Competence/capability	Al-Baqarah (2), verse 286
Humble	Hud (11), verse 23
Fairness	Al-An'am (6), verse 152; Al-Mumtahina (60), verse 8; Al-Najm (53), verse 32
Responsibility	Al-Nisa (4), verse 58–59
Hard work	Al-Baqarah (2), verse 62, 82; Al-An'am (6), verse 135
Right intention	Al-Baqarah (92), verse 25, 225, 62; Al-Taubah (9), verse 105; As-Saff (61),verse 8
Truth	Al-Anfal (7), verse 27; Yunus (10), verse 61; Al-Nur (24), verse 8

Table 2
Prophet's tradition references of Islamic work value constructs.

Constructs	Hadith
Perfectionism	Reported by Imam Al-Tabrani
Fairness	Reported by Ibn Taymiyya
Promise keeping	Narrated by Abdullah bin Amr
Responsibility	Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (Bukahri and Muslim and Ibn Hanbal)
Trustworthiness	Narrated by Abdullah bin Amr in Al-Tirmidhi
Benevolence	Reported by Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim
Competence/capability	Reported in Ibn Taymiyya
Honesty	Narrated by Jarir bin Abdullah and Abu Huraira
Transparency	Reported by Imam al-Tabrani
Cleanliness	Reported in Al-Tirmidhi
Piety	Narrated by Abu Dharr Jundub Ibn Junaadah and Abu 'Abd-ir-Rahmaan
Cooperation	Mu'aadh bin Jabal (Al-Tirmidhi and Imam Nawawi)
Competence/capability	Narrated by Imran Ibn Hussein
Trust/trustworthiness	Reported in Ibn Taymiyya
	Narrated by Jabir Ibn 'Abdullah; Abu Hurairah (Bukhari and Muslim, Abu Dawud)
Timeliness/punctuality	Narrated by Abdullah bin Abbas
Consultation	Narrated by Abu Huraira
Right intention	Narrated by 'Umar bin Al-Khattab and Abu Mas'ud
Sincerity	Narrated by Ziyad bin 'Ilaqa
Truthfulness	Narrated by Ziyad bin 'Ilaqa
Forgiveness	Reported in Sahih Al-Bukhari and Al-Tirmidhi
Consistency	Narrated by A'isha (Sahih Bukhari, Al-Muwatta)
Integrity	Reported in Al-Tirmidhi
Moderation	Narrated Ibn Masud (Sahih Muslim and Riyadh us-Saleheen)
Patience	Narrated by Abu Said Al-Khudri (Sahih Bukhari)
Justice	Narrated by Abu Huraira (Sunan Abu Dawud)

2.3. Reviewing the extant literature on the constructs of Islamic work values

A literature scan of Islamic values revealed numerous values; however, very few were empirically measured. In his book *Theory of Virtue*, Al-Ghazali mentions several values such as abstinence, good appearance, justice, nobility, patience, servitude, sincerity, self-discipline and trust as Islamic values (Sherif, 1975; Ismail & Badron, 2012). In particular, justice as a value of Islam has been widely supported (Al-Qurtubi, 1966; Ali, 1996; Ali, 2005; Abu-Saad, 1998; Khaliq, 1996). Al-Ghazali has even equated the virtue of justice with the entirety of virtues to include political virtue, moral virtue and economic virtue (Sherif, 1975; Ismail & Badron, 2012). Another value that has received heavy emphasis in Islam is consultation (Shaikh, 1988; Yousef, 2000; Abu-Saad, 1998) which is described directly in the Qur'an and in the Prophet's traditions. For example, Prophet Muhammad set a tradition of practicing consultation as part of administrative practices in the Islamic state of Medina of that time and was then practiced by subsequent Islamic leaders (Tayeb, 1997; Budhwar & Fadzil, 2000). Thus, Muslims are highly encouraged to practice this value in all facets of their affairs (Beekun & Badawi, 1999).

Another value that is not only a virtue in Islam but also in other religions and cultures is punctuality or timeliness. Timeliness in Islam is especially highly regarded, as all acts of worship are tied to fixed timeframes such as prayer and fasting (Al-Qurtubi, 2000; Mazrui, 1984). Other values that have been cited as Islamic religious values by numerous scholars such as Shaare (1995); Ibrahim (1996) and Alhabshi (1994) are benevolence, cleanliness, cooperation, perfectionism, forgiveness, gratitude, trustworthiness and piety. Trustworthiness, for example, is specifically mentioned in the Qur'an and in the Prophet's traditions and it was considered the most important value trait for Muslims given that the Prophet has said "*an office is a trust, it is a humiliation except for those who rise equal to the task*" (reported in Muslim). In addition, Islam also advocates other values such as consensus, consistency, hard work and optimum effort, truthfulness, honesty, integrity, promise-keeping, and