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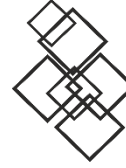
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TOPIC

Eminent Descriptions of Human Resource Management in Islamic Traditions.

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Eminent Descriptions of Human Resource Management in Islamic Traditions

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Abstract

Human resource management has been very important for business organizations to gain a competitive advantage because it is the will and ability of the people who work to make an organization successful. In the age of globalization, HRM needs to be understood in the context of Islam. This field of study is expanding but many aspects remain to be un-explored. The present study focuses on the definition of HRM in Islamic context with its salient features. The research work is theoretical in nature. The qualitative research methodology has been used to answer the research questions. The purpose of the present study is to explore the concept of HRM from an Islamic perspective and to highlight some of its features that distinguish it from the traditional human resource function. The basic sources of Islam i.e., Quran and Traditions of the Holy Prophet (SAW) are used as well as modern literature on HRM. It has been concluded that Islam offers a unique perspective on the management and organization of working people which lacks the existing HRM function. It highlights the need and importance of studying HRM in the context of Islam.

Key Words:

Human Resource Management, Islam, Islamic perspective, Divine guidance, human dignity, cooperation

1. Introduction:

The common understanding is that material resources do not make an organization successful; rather, it is the hardworking people who make an organization productive and prosperous. Today, every well-off organization recognizes the value of people in order to gain a competitive advantage.¹ The need for more efficient, economical and equitable management of those working in business and industry is more important today than ever before. The policies and practices that govern the way people are treated at work are called human resource management.² It is a branch of knowledge that deals with managing people, hiring them, developing their skills, promoting them to a higher

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level of performance, and making sure that they work with the organization.³ There is no unanimously accepted definition of human resource management, but there are some principles that provide the basis for human resource management function:

- Work people are investments, if efficiently managed. The development of employees can offer long-term recompenses to the organization in case of enhanced productivity.⁴
- Develop strategies, programs and procedures that congregate the monetary and affection needs of employees.
- A working environment should be created in which employees are encouraged to make the most of their abilities.⁵

The beginning of human resource management function is more of Western trend that can be outlined by the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century. The main concepts of contemporary HRM are deeply held Western secular worldview. Muhammad Omar Chapra examines that the Western Renaissance has affected almost all societies around the world to a different degree with its secular and money oriented worldview.⁶ Western management thinkers and intellectuals practically deny any role for God in modern business practices. A prominent economist of Muslim World, Dr. Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqui explains that the worldview associated with modern Western philosophy either refutes the being of God or does not assign any social significance to His existence.⁷ Because of this human resource management is also alien to religion and its potential effects on employees' behavior at work. The human resource management concept derived from secular standpoint might be effective in Western countries; however, its effectiveness in Muslim countries is yet to be proved. Muslim societies are entirely different from that of non-Muslim societies. The question arises about the effectiveness of western human resource management function in the Islamic societies and business environment.

Today with the spread of globalization effects, many Western business organizations are doing business in Islamic countries. These companies adopt and implement their own human resource systems, which are primarily designed with Western society and culture in mind. Some changes need to be made to the traditional human resource management function to emphasize the Islamic cultural influence on human resource management. However, the question is whether Islam offers any guidance regarding human resource management or is it silent in this regard? This research article examines

the basic origins of Islam such as Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet (SAW) to answer the above questions.

2. Islam and HRM:

The importance of studying HRM in Islamic context and the development of HRM model based on Islamic principles is important for various reasons. Today's world is constantly changing and flowing.⁸ Dramatic changes and developments can be seen in all systems of life. Business organizations are also facing changing trends and phenomena that were not common in the past. The businesses have to put extra effort to compete with their competitors. It is now widely accepted reality that sound human resource management is the prominent competitive aspect for any business organization.⁹ There is no doubt in this statement that humans are the fundamental building blocks of any societal structure.¹⁰ In economic parlance humans are the utmost important part of production besides other factors of production. As organizations demand that their employees execute to the best of their capacity while working, they are looking for ways to organize and motivate people to improve organizational performance and productivity.¹¹ Increase the influence of religious teachings on the governance of the people is significant, but HRM is seldom highlighted in religious contexts in the management literature.

Religion impacts directly on the human social behaviours.¹² Islam has a unique view on the balance between work and life.¹³ Islam as a religion is not just an explicit system of beliefs, ways of worship and practice. it is actually a social system and way of life. It aims to create a distinct civilization for society. Islam provides an exclusive cultural model for Muslims. Islam insists that unless they adopt this style they cannot succeed.¹⁴ Islam cares about the relationship of man towards his Lord. With this it also cares about relationship of a Muslim with his fellow beings and his way of living.¹⁵ Islam is not confined to some sets of rituals to be performed in places of worship.¹⁶

Islam not only criticises materialistic way of life however; clergy or being priest is also disallowed in Islam. Religion is not a personal matter according to Islamic philosophy.¹⁷ It has gone beyond personal life to collective life. Islamic teachings apply to every facet of human life. No dimension of life is outside the realm of Holy Laws. Islamic teachings are tantamount to accepting a spiritual, political and social lifestyle. It cares about how to deal with private and communal life.¹⁸ Islamic instructions and

philosophies impact all walks of life. There is no dissection between secular and spiritual in Islam. World related dealings and activities are integral part of Islam.¹⁹ All Muslim activities are considered worship in Islamic teachings. Going forward this is also true that business and work are an essential part of life of a Muslim.²⁰ How is it possible that a religion that has come to guide mankind in every age has neglected important aspects of human management?

It is noteworthy that human resource management functions in its distinct field of study do not exist in the early days of Islam. However, it is fact that Islamic teachings provided in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) necessary for the success of individual and collective life are applicable to every age and every society. They ensure success in this world as well as success in the Hereafter.²¹ Islamic teachings encourage and praise the running of halal businesses. Islamic principles play a guiding role in the development of human resource policy. The aim of both human resource management and Islam is to change the people's attitudes. Relationship between human resource management and Islam is robust because both consider humans as the focus of their consideration. The importance of studying human resource management in Islamic context and development of human resource management model based on Islamic principles is important for various reasons. Firstly, today's world is watching drastic changes in all systems of life.²² And secondly, business organizations are also facing changing trends and phenomena that were not common in the past. In the next section we shall analyse the impact of Islamic cultures on human resource management.

3. Impact of Islamic Culture on HRM:

Successful human resource management practices in one social setup and work environment cannot be fruitful in another work environment deprived of proper adjustment.²³ Human resource management is profoundly affected by inside and outside factors. Some internal and external factors comprise challenges of globalization, manpower multiplicity, technology and change in skills requirements, employee engagement, ethics and employer-employee relations.²⁴ Furthermore, studies have demonstrated the cultural influence of the native country on human resource management strategic choices and practices in overseas subsidiaries. Another point is that organizational culture is formed through dialogue between people.²⁵ Human resource management is all about the rapport between management and employees. So

it becomes clear that human resource management is also culture specific for its strong association with people. So this aspect of human resource management is also socially specific. Business organizations and their employees are certainly affected by the socio-political conditions of the society. Professional and job related outlooks and attitudes are considered as important part of a nation's cultural character.²⁶

The country's national culture influences human resource management through diverse rules and protocols that direct employee management relationships. The relationships include job schedules, health safety and environment, economic well-being of employees. Religious beliefs play a vital role in shaping and sustaining national culture and the value system of society, so the workplace environment is deeply influenced by the culture of countries as well as religious beliefs and practices. In most Islamic countries, the influence of Islam on public culture is considerable.²⁷

Being a comprehensive and holistic religion Islam plays a prevailing character in individual, collective, social, political, economic and legal system of the society. Islam influences businesses through changing national culture. As an important aspect of human resource management practices in organizations, it is deeply influenced by the values and beliefs related to Islamic work. Hence Monir Tayyab argues that Islam inspires business organizations through national culture. This shows that in human resource management in Muslim societies are vastly influenced by religion. Many Islamic business organizations are now emerging in the global market. They are trying to implement basic teachings of Islam related to management of workpeople. The impact of Islamic teachings on managers and employees can be seen in the decisions of all national and international affairs related to their administration and work. In the Muslim world, there is a growing need for business organizations to study the human resource management function in the light of Islamic teachings.

4. Islamic HRM Model:

Organizing people and controlling human behaviour within organizations is a powerful means of maximizing the productivity of people. The process of administration is called "Tadbir" in the Qur'anic language.²⁸ According to Islam, Allah is the real ruler and administrator of this universe. The Qur'an says:

And who manages everything? They will say, :Allah. ²⁹

However, Allah Almighty has entrusted the angels and mankind

with some tasks to perform the duties assigned to them.

then manage (to do) everything (they are ordered to do,) ³⁰

Allah Almighty has made man His caliph on this earth. As the vicegerent of Allah Almighty, he is also an employee whom Allah has appointed to enforce His commands on this earth.

(The ones who help Allah are) those who, when We give them power in the land, establish Salah, pay Zakah, bid what is Fair and forbid what is Unfair.

And with Allah lies the fate of all matters. ³¹

From an Islamic perspective, human resource management is the best use of all human and material resources to achieve certain goals.³² Allah Almighty permits man to make maximum use of all the resources created for the sole object of serving humanity.³³ Now considering human resource management in the Islamic context, Islam does not seek to fade the importance and significance of the function recognized by human resource management. Islam maintains balance between human resource management policies and Divine rules and moral virtues. The real purpose of man according to Qur'an is to gain the pleasure of God. This is the highest criterion and purpose of human life. After establishing the pleasure of Allah as the ultimate goal of human life, Islam seeks to develop an human resource management function that fully utilizes and develops human abilities and capabilities to achieve this goal as well as organizational goals. This type of HRM function promotes goodness and harmony in the workplace and eliminates all evils and vices.

Sabah Alorfi argues that Islamic human resource management is not more than that to a process of managing human activities to a set of basic principles derived from the basic sources of Islam.³⁴ Human resource management in Islamic perspective may be defined as:

“HRM in Islamic perspective is concerned with obtaining, organizing and motivating people in organizations and to make effective use of them to achieve organizational and individual goals in accordance with the teachings of Islam to seek the Pleasure of Allah Almighty.”

Islamic human resource management function focuses on building corporate performance and effectiveness through encouraging employees to be successful in achieving individual and organizational goals as well as to achieve the pleasure of Allah Almighty. Islamic human resource management makes work people socially

responsible and ethical in all circumstances.³⁵ Human resource management in Islamic perspective emphasizes on the organizational behaviour.

5. Prominent Attributes of HRM in Islamic Perspective:

HRM in Islamic perspective has some distinguishing characteristics that do not exist in the conventional HRM function. Here are some salient features of HRM function in Islamic perspective are explained.

5.1 Guidance from Divine Sources:

The traditional HRM function is based on human intellect, knowledge and experience. Islam recognizes the role of rational inquiry on the basis of observation and experience, however mainly Islam relies on divine revelation.³⁶ The theoretical and conceptual framework of all modern issues facing humanity, including HRM in the Islamic context, is based primarily on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. The Qur'an is the word of Allah which has been revealed to His chosen Messenger and the last Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in full and final form. The Qur'an is not a book about managing people but it does give some basic principles about managing people in the workplace. Remarkable rules and principles of the Holy Qur'an have been clearly stated for the benefit of human beings. The Holy Qur'an was revealed to the last Messenger of Allah, Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) for the guidance of human beings. All Muslims strive to imitate his words, examples and silent affirmations of his well-known uses. He is the best example and guide in the life of Muslims.³⁷ He is the best example for all generations, for not just one time but for all times to come. It describes in detail the obligations and responsibilities of employees and employers, as well as the methods and means of organizing employees.

5.2 Pleasure of Allah Almighty-the Ultimate objective:

Setting goal in life is a very important aspect of the management process.³⁸ Modern business organizations chase monetary goals to succeed in the market. However, Islam views this world in a different angle. The real purpose of all human activities is to gain the pleasure of Allah. This is the most important element of Islamic belief, as well as most important goals of Islamic human resource management function. In Islamic teachings, this is the benchmark by which a specific behaviour can be classified as virtuous or bad. According to Islamic point

of view, human resource management explicitly sets a goal to please Allah Almighty. All the employees in an Islamic business organization are motivated to achieve this goal.³⁹ All of human resource management policies and actions on an organization are influenced by this valuable goal. The human resource department suggests and recommends policies to higher authorities that are consistent with the goal of gaining Allah's approval. All human resource management policies in the Islamic organization are formulated with this goal in mind.

5.3 Human Dignity:

According to Western human resource management standpoint man is just an economic entity, a factor of production among other non-living factors of productions such as capital, land and machinery. Work people are perceived as "economic men" who are primarily motivated by economic expansion. And that employee performance can only be maximized through financial incentives.⁴⁰ Islam rejects this narrow-minded view of man, which in one way or another means that man is only a means of production. Furthermore, human beings are considered 'resources' to achieve certain goals, which mean the importance of the purpose for which "human resources" are used.⁴¹ Islam has made man superior to all the creatures of the earth and has endowed him with honour and respect. Human dignity means being treated like a human being at work, not like the nuts and bolts of machinery. He should be treated like a respectable person. Human resource policies should focus on its economic, moral and intellectual well-being.

5.4 Morality:

Islam views no partition between morals, ethics, and spirituality. From an Islamic perspective, human resource management is centred on ethics and morality. The Islamic system of human resource management focuses on workplace activities in line with ethical values.⁴² In the ethical setup it decides the right and wrong of an action. Man's monetary attitude is based on his strong religious beliefs. He is not devoid of Islamic morality in every sphere of his life. It is narrated on the authority of the Holy Prophet that he said:

Narrated Masruq : Abdullah bin 'Amr added, Allah's Messenger (SAW) said, "The best among you are those who have the best manners and the best character." ⁴³

Not only is an individual committed to Muslim moral values, but also an organization at the collective level is committed to moral values. Islam has laid down some universal basic moral values for all humanity which must be observed and respected in all circumstances.

5.5 Coordination (Mutual Interest):

Islamic concept of human resource management keeps the objective of attainment of pleasure of Allah as the final objective. This is also objective of all Muslims. So employer and employee in Islam share same interests and objectives. This common objective of attainment of pleasure of Allah creates a sense of mutual interest and harmony in the business organizations. Moreover, Islamic teachings also insist on making decision with consultation and coordination. It is stated in the Qur'an:

*“O you who believe, do not devour each other’s property by false means, unless it is trade conducted with your mutual consent. Do not kill one another. Indeed, Allah has been Very-Merciful to you.”*⁴⁴

Islam guides its adherents to live a life of cooperation with fellow beings. Cooperation and consultation however, should be in lawful matters. Cooperation in itself includes the meaning of "the desire to be helpful and the desire to do something together or to work together for a common goal." Allah Almighty says:

*“Help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression. Fear Allah. Surely, Allah is severe at punishment.”*⁴⁵

The consultation process and coordination make a workplace more conducive and pleasant. The studies have shown that more the harmonious and better workplace more will be the productivity.⁴⁶ Islam advocates for coordination at all levels. The shared objectives and coordinated efforts make human resource management process in an Islamic organization a best fit for success in the market.

5.6 Concept of Halal and Haram:

In the light of Islamic teachings being Omnipotent, Real Ruler of the Universe, Allah Almighty is constantly supervising, monitoring and managing this entire Universe. In some areas he has provided liberty to human intellect to choose for

themselves what is good for them and what is not beneficial for them. However, in some cases according to the Wisdom of Allah, man is unable to define appropriately for himself what is suitable for him or what is not suitable for him. In these areas Allah Almighty has drawn a circle of permissible activities and highlighted the forbidden. The permissible are to be enjoyed while forbidden are those areas which should not be followed. Performing lawful activities bring happiness, prosperity and Pleasure of Allah, while disobeying His Laws leads to His wrath.⁴⁷

In human resource management context every organization works under the concept of permissible and forbidden business areas. The human resource management policies must be outlines within the boundaries of permissible and non-permissible. In a human resource management function various benefits and privileges are offered to employees. According to Islamic teachings all these privileges must be according to the Islamic concept of permissible and forbidden. The human resource policies have to be devised in such a way to be in line with Islamic ordainments. For example to avoid use of interest (Riba), human resource managers must follow those financial schemes which are interest free. Moreover, it is duty of human resource management to create an environment in which doing good deeds is facilitated and doing bad deeds is made difficult for employees. A business organization should offer such schemes for instance, Hajj and Umrah schemes and other privileges on maintaining responsible behaviour in the business organizations.

5.7 Welfare of People:

Islamic organization operates to enjoy optimum profit in the market keeping in view the different stakeholders. Employees are major stakeholder of their work organization. Every successful organization needs to satisfy the material and spiritual needs of their employees. Worker's welfare has be a topic of debate from centuries. However, after the Industrial Revolution and rise of trade unions, this topic has become a burning issue. Much is done to improve the mental, physical, hygienic, and other needs of the working class. Islam insists on providing fundamental rights to working class. The Holy Qur'an states:

*"the All-Merciful, the Very Merciful."*⁴⁸

Form this verse of the Holy Qur'an foundations of the welfare of employees are extracted. Allah Almighty is very kind to His creatures. He also intends that His

qualities of mercy and kindness be embraced by the Muslims. A tradition of the Holy Prophet (SAW) states:

Jarir bin Abdullah (R.A) says that the Holy Prophet (SAW):

Narrated Jarir bin 'Abdullah: the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "Whoever does not show mercy to the people, Allah will not show mercy to him." 49

The person who does not show mercy to his fellow being can not be a Muslim. While the Prophet (SAW) said about covering the faults of Muslims:

Narrated Abu Hurairah: the Prophet said (SAW): "Whoever relieves a Muslim of a burden from the burdens of the world, Allah will relieve him of a burden from the burdens on the Day of Judgement. And whoever helps ease a difficulty in the world, Allah will grant him ease from a difficulty in the world and in the Hereafter. And whoever covers (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will cover (his faults) for him in the world and the Hereafter. And Allah is engaged in helping the worshipper as long as the worshipper is engaged in helping his brother." 50

The workers are also brothers of their administration and owners on the humanity basis. Therefore, it is central duty of management and owners to care for the welfare of the employees. Human resource management policies must be shaped in a way to maximum address the welfare of their work people.

5.8 Hereafter Oriented:

Islamic teachings are primarily based on Final judgement and Hereafter. According to this concept every action of a person has to be judged. On the Day of Judgement mercy and justice of Allah will appear in a perfect balance. The one who do good deeds will be rewarded with Paradise, a life of eternal enjoyment, and the one who performs bad deeds will suffer forever.

The Qur'an says:

"So, whoever does any good act (even) to the weight of a particle will see it. And whoever does evil (even) to the weight of a particle will see it." 51

In human resource management practices this concept of Final Judgement plays vital role. Unlike materialistic approach in an Islamic business organization every decision is taken keeping in mind the accountability of the hereafter. The concept of accountability by an unseen supervision totally changes the attitude of employee.

For instance the Qur'an says:

*“and that his effort will soon be seen, then he will be recompensed for it in full,”*⁵²

When this concept is born in mind by the top management and an ordinary worker, the performance level of each of them is changed. They all work not for mere material rewards but also to be successful in the Day of Judgment. This concept makes employees more productive. Moreover, the human resource policies are devised to be just to the interest of the organization as well as to the interests of the employees. It is ensured that none of them is deprived of their rights, so that the organization becomes successful not only in this world but also in the hereafter.

6. Conclusion

From an Islamic point of view human resource management rejects the treatment of working people like any other material means of production. It focuses on recruiting, organizing, and motivating people in organizations so that they can use them effectively to achieve organizational and individual goals in accordance with the teachings of Islam in order to gain the pleasure of God Almighty. In the Islamic context, HRM is in line with its ideology of life and worldview. It is a balanced approach that, on the one hand, encourages employees to improve performance in order to achieve the core objectives of the organization. On the other hand, it focuses on the behaviour of organizations in order to create an environment that is conducive to the material and spiritual development of employees. From an Islamic point of view, HRM has features that are lacking in traditional HRM. From an Islamic point of view, HRM draws guidance from divine sources with human rational research and experience. Islam does not invalidate the attainment of material goals but its focus is on the attainment of the highest goal of human life "the pleasure of Allah". The concept of HRM in Islam is based on human dignity and is not considered as merely a tool of production and services. HRM policies should be in line with the concept of the hereafter and should be based on ethical behaviour in organizations. The concept of the hereafter and ethics makes employees and institutions more responsible. Another notable feature of HRM from an Islamic point of view is its unity and organizational culture to spread good and forbid anything wrong. Furthermore, HRM's policies should be in line with the Islamic concept of 'halal' and 'haram'. Finally, from an Islamic point of view, HRM is universal in nature. All these features of HRM in the Islamic context make it more conducive and meaningful to the achievement of organizational and individual goals.

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- ⁴⁸ Al-Fatiha (1): 2
- ⁴⁹ Jami' At-Tirmidhi, Chapters On Righteousness And Maintaining Good Relations With Relatives From The Messenger Of Allah, Chapter (16). What Has Been Related About Being Merciful With People, (1922), 39/4
- ⁵⁰ Jami' At-Tirmidhi, Chapters On Righteousness And Maintaining Good Relations With Relatives From The Messenger Of Allah, Chapter (19). What Has Been Related About Covering (The Faults) Of The Muslims, (1930), 44-45/4
- ⁵¹ Al-Zilzal (99): 7-8
- ⁵² Al-Najm (53): 40-41