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# Cultivating Spirituality in Community Development

## Ratna Roshida Ab Razak[1], Haji Ahmad Nasir Mohd Yusoff[2], Rahimah Embong[3], Aiza Maslan[4]

[1,2]Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), [3]Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UnisZa), [4]School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
Email: ratna_razak@upm.edu.my

**Abstract**
The objective of this concept paper is to suggest that spirituality should be integrated into community development. As the impact of science on our lives grow stronger, religion and spirituality are playing greater role in reminding us of our humanity. A greater knowledge of spirituality is required to define the essence of spirituality. Based on the thinking of Dalai Lama, a spiritual Guru, this spiritual essence is defined as a moral compass that helps to balance the toxic emotions that often accompany modern materialism. This moral compass is an essential principle of the concept spirituality which includes the promotion of human values in order to have happier individuals, families and communities -- and, in that way, are strongly informed by spiritual values like wisdom, kindness, patience, generosity and compassion. The nexus between the vertical and horizontal spirituality is examined to highlight the inherent issues to bring in the spiritual approach into community development. The impact of spirituality in community development is discussed at length to testify that spirituality can play a pivotal part in changing the 'soulless life', arguing that the six dimensions of community development, namely economic, social, political, spiritual, cultural, and environmental are strongly formed by spiritual values.
**Keywords:** Spirituality, Community Development, Values, Soul

**Introduction**
Spirituality and community development such as sustainable livelihoods setting, are fundamentally multidisciplinary. The disaster of the global social environment and the community development such as sustainable livelihood crisis arising from the negative impacts of technology's rapid development contributing to cultural, political, and religious tension and inequality. As a result, people are facing many challenges today because they're not following the right path and they themselves would not be able to be a protector of the world, but letting the technology to steer and navigate them.

It seems that human being is also detached and separated from the sacred treasuries that consist of significance, value and purpose of life that exist in all religions, traditions and culture, known as spirituality. The society of today assesses itself positively as civilized and progressive one. Mass consumption is very influential feature and increasingly becoming top

notch technical and materialistic society, and widely valued by materialistic interest people. 'More' is highly desired and cherished by those living in this materialism type of society and sometimes is considered as a yardstick of community development, development that stress upon the materialism.

Community development is defined by the United Nations as "a process in which people of a community come together to take collective action and discover solutions to common challenges." It's a broad word that refers to civic leaders, activists, concerned citizens, and professionals working to improve many aspects of communities in order to make them stronger and more resilient. Individuals and groups are empowered to impact change in their communities through community development. In order to impact change, each and every individual, first and foremost need to be empowered, individual need to know component that really play the role in empowering oneself, and it is known n as a spiritual component. These abilities are frequently acquired through the process of knowing themselves. However much of the literature in this study disregard to take spirituality on board.

Although the importance of spirituality in community practice is recognized, there is a scarcity of research on how spirituality community could be integrated into their work. The study will provide an overview on the importance of spirituality into community development. According to spiritual Guru, Dalai Lama, the purpose of spirituality is like a moral compass that balances out the unpleasant emotions that so often accompany modern materialism. With the ever-growing impact of science on our lives, spirituality has a greater role to play in reminding us of our humanity.

**Methodology**

This research also uses a systematic approach analysis, where problem-solving is objectively measured on the basis of knowledge obtained from Logotherapy theory, as theory that stress on existential questions. This theory emphasis on meaning, purpose and value of life and the importance of having relationships.

**Discussion**

*The Importance of Spirituality in Community Development*

Many researchers have become interested in spirituality in recent years. Despite the fact that the concept is generally considered archaic, its comeback in recent decades is noteworthy. This curiosity is palpable in the current COVID-19 pandemic era, in which humans must admit that they are weak in certain areas and succumb to the Superpower.

Much of the literature in the field of community development ignores the concept of spirituality entirely. Kenny (1999) views community development centres on giving control of their lives to ordinary people by educating and empowering as well as enabling them to negotiate and challenge the oppressive force and does not include a spiritual component. Twelvetress (1991) as cited in Brian (2008), further postulates that community development is "the process of assisting ordinary people to improve their own community by undertaking collective action". Mc Ardle on the other hand affirms that community development can only work when there is consorted effort both from the fronts of personal growth and social change. Even though the views are differing from one to another, what we can understand from this fact is that the notion of spirituality is not clearly spell out.

In this respect, if we probe to the indigenous people, it is clear to us that they are spiritual group of people and dare to remind the non-indigenous group of people to take into account the aspect of spiritual dimension. As ponders by Ife (1995), cited in Brian (2008) "For indigenous people, one of the major criticisms of modern Western society is that it does not have this profound sense of the sacredness and spiritual nature of all things, and has lost what gives meaning, sense and unity to life." (2002, p. 196)

Chile and Simpson (2004) also stress the importance of spirituality in community development, as they state, "spirituality in community development seeks to remove those things that suppress the expression of individual and collective empowerment."

Chattopadhyaya (1976), cited in Brian (2008) proposes that, "when the individual realizes the unity of mankind in his spiritual depth, it is reflected in the community life." This is because spirituality, which may be defined as life's meaning, purpose, and value, may create a relationship between oneself, men and nature, men and men, and men and Superpower. Spiritual resources will be available as a result of these links, allowing us to confront our life as an earthly species. However, if we don't have internal clarity about what we want for our lives, our purpose, and our values, it means, we have no underlying sense to govern our lives, no internal blueprint, that consequently may lead us to areas we don't necessarily want to go.

An Indian philosopher sage, Sri Aurobinclo (1949, p. 273) cited in Brian (2008), explaining the importance of spirituality says that "it is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order" We can comprehend from this remark that the effectiveness of a collective group is ultimately determined by the combined spirituality of each individual member. So, what is spirituality in the context of community development? Researchers have presented various definitions of spirituality over the years. Spirituality is perceived and experienced differently by people and culture. The term inspires people to reflect on their lives and discover the true meaning of their lives. They have attempted to outline and explore various parameters that can aid in identifying and achieving the individual's goals. In the framework of this discussion, I'd like to describe spirituality from an Islamic perspective while taking into consideration different points of view as well.

*The Nexus of horizontal and vertical dimensions' spirituality*
The word "spiritual" can evoke images of the sacred experience of the soul, the aspect that responsible for the question of meaning, purpose and value of life. Awareness connotes the mind at work and is usually associated with analytical problem-solving and scientific understanding. Spirituality is at the heart of human life, and it has recently sparked renewed interest in global health (Vader, 2006).

Human beings were born into three fundamental dimensions, physical, intellectual and spiritual. For the physical realm, it is best described systemically as consisting of complex structures such as the intestinal, central nervous, renal, endocrine, reproductive and lymphoid organs. The second realm is intellectual, where the brain plays a role. The third is the metaphysical world, call spiritual realm.

According to Islamic perspective, spirituality is the force beyond man and his being. It is personal knowledge that is made up of an important organ, an organ that known as the soul. It's where the spiritual heart resides. This soul together with 'aql (mind) are where a person can derive a meaning, purpose and value of life. In order to better grasp the construct of spirituality, we could divide it into two dimensions, firstly, vertical dimension, which is having the intimacy and connectedness with God or superpower and secondly the horizontal

dimension that comprises of self-transcendence, self-integration in relationship with self, connectedness and relationship with other fellow human being and with nature too. The horizontal dimension is a dimension in which community development is heavily discussed.

For vertical dimension, this may be a subjective and intangible relationship formed with Supreme power of God, which first and foremost should be established after the relationship between the person and his or her inner. As compassion, acceptance and awareness of the person increase, the state of well-being in the spiritual sphere also shows positive development. This is because a healthy, clean heart is going to give a blissful feeling. With a well emotion, one can rationalize oneself and deal with the situation wisely and successfully.

The spirit, or the soul, resides in this sacred core. In religion and philosophy, the immaterial portion, the metaphysical aspect is the essence of a human being, which confers individuality and humanity, is often considered to be identified with the mind or self. In theology, the soul is further defined as that part of the person that is part of the divinity and is therefore considered to survive the death of the body. According to Islam, this divine domain places the heart or is referred to as the "qalb" in Arabic. In the Bible, the world "Lev" (heart) appears 1024 times, and the frequency that affirms the multivalence of the meaning common to the Hebrew and ancient Semites, for whom the heart, as a vital organ of life, is a location for the attention of all vital powers. (Religious Encyclopedia) The success of the work of the heart can be manifested and represented in akhlaq (virtuous deeds) capable of producing pure values or virtues. In the context of community development, values like benevolence, integrity, justice, mutuality, receptive, responsibility and so on is seriously needed

Spirituality is now widely examined, especially in relation to many other manifestations, such as identity, quest for the essence of life, technique for coping, well-being and wellbeing. In terms of unique skills, Sisk (2019) indicates that spirituality can also have properties or organs that are better interpreted in terms of special abilities. In this case, according to Islamic perspective, in the spiritual domain, there is spiritual organs like, heart, soul and aql (intellect). Burns (1991) stated that the level of harmony between intellect and soul will determine the level of self-realization of oneself. In order for this process to work, spirituality requires those instrument that encourages or enables many of its activities (especially the quest for both general and personal meaning in life).

Spirituality is the possession of meaning, purpose, and value in one's life, derive from one's worldview or belief system that take place in the spiritual dimension. It is here that the soul (ruh) and the metaphysical organ known as the heart (qalb) reside. We are who we are because of our soul. This is consistent with Brian's (2008) notion that the concept of creative energy or being has a connection to our souls, which is shared by many belief systems. As Mclaughlin (2006), cited in Brian (2008) asserts "Man, know thyself and thou will know the universe and the Gods", while Bible (Luke 17: 21) assert that, cited from Brian (2008) "the kingdom of God is within you". The 19th Japanese Buddhist monk, Kiyozawa Manshi, when been asked, "what is Buddhism?", he answer that "Know thyself" (Hata, 1999) In Islam, in one of narration, the Prophet Muhammad PBUP him says that" those who know himself, will know God". This means that one's identity is linked to one's daily beliefs and motives, and that such a cognitive-behavioural perspective is commonly used by community development in the formulation of a list of spiritual values.

The component of spirituality in community development connotes and signifies that each and every individual need to grasp the essence of being that lies in the process of

knowing themselves. This is when they will realize that in order to provide meaning, purpose, and value to this, they must build a relationship or connection, first and foremost, with his or herself and followed by the other human beings. Gupta (1996, p. 154), cited in Brian (2008) affirms that "by changing the inner condition, one brings about a responsive change in the external world". As a result, connectedness is a means of bringing spirituality to life.

*Spirituality as A Core for Community Development*
Spirituality refers to the traits that motivate us to act in the best interests of ourselves and others. It could entail encountering those greater forces, particularly our interactions with other beings and our interconnectedness with them. It also entails putting those abilities into practice in one's personal, professional, and social lives.

Economic, social empowerment, social consciousness, capacity building and income-generating activities of community are necessary. But they are not sufficient for community to experience fullness of life. In addition to that, the community also require a supportive caring environment to empower the inner side of themselves, adequate fulfilment of the spiritual needs, and opportunities to reflect on their lives, influences, hopes, challenges and difficulties. It is necessary for them to realize their own nature and understand the value of their own existence.

When the community realize their own nature, they will have confidence and will participate in decision making independently, not rely on others to do so. This will be possible only when they will be empowered spiritually. However, this also means to bring a significant change in the social mentality. Many times, an individual has confidence and has realized his own potential, but society prohibits and blocks the progress. The question is how we can take this step toward spiritual empowerment?

In his research, Rapp (2010) found that spirituality is a source of strength. Spiritual strength, according to Pierre in Nelson (2009), can help one understand spirituality, especially the main component of it, which is the meaning of his life, encourage human beings to always think of doing good, especially toward the other fellow human being, pushing them to obey commands of the leaders, protect nature, societal norms that affect one's soul and mind, develop fighting spirit, particularly when facing with challenges, and guide one towards a meaningful transformation in life, individually and collectively. We feel that spirituality is critical to community development, especially given how far education has progressed in teaching people to provide meaning and purpose to every life, every moment through connections with fellow human beings.

As a result of separating spirit (soul) from matter, we now live in a world devoid of spirit (soul). Nothing new can be born unless spirit (soul) returns: we will continue to live in a materialistic desert devoid of the true meaning, purpose, value, and joy of life, and without a strong desire to contribute to society and be a community development agent.

We truly think that by establishing a strong mental and spiritual foundation, we can not only assist communities in becoming economically self-sufficient, allowing them to contribute to the economy, but also equip them with a spiritual ability that allows them to fight injustice of any kind and magnitude throughout their lives without having to rely on others, such as government agencies.

Spiritual practice can strengthen a person's ability for authenticity, empathy, and unconditional love; therefore, every member of the community should first and foremost get to know themselves. By adding an appropriate type of spiritual practice, a community development group may be able to improve communication skills, which in turn may boost

the individual full potential, group's cohesion and ability for cooperation. Their full potential must be realized in order to bring about numerous great changes. The community has the ability to face today's problems at their source and produce effective and long-term solutions. They must realize their inner potential, uncover their abilities, desires, and needs, address their challenges, and tackle the various forms of interpersonal and institutional oppression that they experience. This is critical for the entire community to develop and to live a full potential.

Spirituality discussions can be quite beneficial to community development in terms of becoming more aware of one's own and others' interconnections. We can become aware of the full potential of our practice: that we may strengthen ourselves by reuniting the individual with the whole. Then we may reclaim what has been taken from us, reclaim our spiritual power, and truly acknowledge our interconnectedness.

For the community development, it should lie on the foundation of connectedness that can exist between individuals or between individuals and social institutions, such as schools and other organizations. In addition, constructs such as social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985), social integration, and social connection (Barber & Schluterman, 2008) point to the benefits of healthy relationships, particularly among the communities.

Connections may contribute to an enhanced sense of belonging, a large social network, active engagement in one's community, improved perceptions of closeness and support, the provision of tangible resources and health information, exposure to positive modelling, mentorship, and engagement in pro-social activities, according to people in the circle of connectedness (Cohen & Wills, 1985). While social relationships within and beyond the family have been connected to happiness, a lack of such relationships has been connected to an increased risk of bad outcomes. The ideal concept of cultivating spirituality and community development as a vehicle for aiding universal social transformation might be used to highlight the general usefulness of spirituality in community development practice.

**Conclusion**

This paper highlighted how spirituality may play a part in community development, starting with one's own self, where spiritual ideals are born. Since the essence of the self, according to Islamic perspective, is a soul itself, the concept of "knowing oneself" could be regarded the essence of spirituality. Spirituality, defined as the possession of meaning, purpose, and worth in one's life that begins with oneself and is strongly related to metaphysical elements such as the heart and soul, is an important concept to incorporate into community development. Community development demands connectedness, which incorporates spirituality, in order for transformative change to occur, since spirituality plays a crucial role in the process of social transformation that begins with individuals.

Spirituality is a valuable community resource that should not be ignored. There are a variety of approaches, such as being linked, that can help to cultivate and expand spirituality's acceptance in community development. It benefits both individuals and societies since it is a powerful motivator and driver. When integrated with other assets in community development, spirituality can aid in the establishment of a more complete and meaningful community.

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