

Comparison of Ihsan and Altruism Concepts

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Abstract

The education sector in Malaysia nowadays is a fast-growing sector. The higher education sector under the responsibility of the government is divided into two, namely as Public Higher Education Institutions (IPTA) and Private Higher Education Institutions (IPTS). The objective of this study is to examine the understanding of the significance of the concept of Ihsan in relation to altruism. Outwardly, Muslims need to have the concept of *Ihsan* in their work. This element is a reinforcing belief which to be instilled in us how sincere we need to work and not just expect rewards. When we can achieve these attributes, we will try to relax with all the provisions and focus on ensuring that the organization we represent is always on a good track. The religion of Islam is *syumul* or perfect which encompasses all things in a person's life. Perfection is inseparable from highlighting a noble personality and the best example in doing a job. In Islam, it is closer to being associated with the concept of *Ihsan*. This is because it is closely related to an organisational management system that meets the quality and standards. The results of the research found that the concept of *Ihsan* in Islam is an important element in producing the best and effective organizational management. The concept of human beings can be equated with the concept of Altruism which is one of the dimensions in the theory of organizational citizenship behavior. In work, a worker should need to have the nature of *Ihsan* or Altruism.

Keywords: Ihsan & Altruism

Introduction

The education sector in Malaysia nowadays is a fast-growing sector. The higher education sector under the responsibility of the government is divided into two, namely as Public Higher

Education Institutions (IPTA) and Private Higher Education Institutions (IPTS). IPTA and IPTS are bound under two different acts, namely as the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Private Higher Education Institutions Act 1996 which are in line with the objectives of its establishment. IPTA was established in line with the government's intention and sense of responsibility to ensure that Malaysians can enjoy higher education, especially from affordable families or B40 families. Meanwhile, IPTS was established with the intention of bringing Malaysia to the global level as a sustainable education sector industry. Until now, the number of public universities that have been gazetted by the government is (20) while there are 388 registered IPTS as of February 29, 2024, according to the Department of Higher Education (JPT) website, comprising 63 Private Universities, 32 University Colleges, 10 Overseas Branch University Villages and 283 Colleges.

In line with the government's intention in the implementation of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2020, among others, it places the role of Higher Learning Institutions (IPT), as a store of knowledge and human development to produce scientists, scholars, skilled and semi-skilled workers to contribute to the country's socio-economy. Therefore, the strengthening of holistic human capital should be emphasized for the lecturers so they can focus to build education platform as priority.

Altruism and *ihsan* are crucial elements in the educational context as both contribute to creating an environment that supports academic success and personal development. Altruism, which emphasizes concern for the well-being of others, enables lecturers to better understand and address students' needs, providing the necessary academic and moral support. This can boost students' self-confidence, reduce stress, and encourage them to reach their full potential. Meanwhile, the concept of *ihsan*, which encourages lecturers to give their best in teaching with dedication and sincerity, creates a more meaningful and productive learning atmosphere. Both elements help foster positive relationships between lecturers and students, while also shaping an inclusive, competitive, and balanced academic culture.

According to Bakar, Othman and Ghani (2021), the fierce competition between IPTA and IPTS results in all burdens resting on the shoulders of academic staff. This competition includes the pursuit of the best IPT rankings and also the influence of globalization (Sofyani & Nazaruddin, 2019). The busyness of IPT to pursue *rankings* or ratings such as SETARA or MyRA has become the latest trend. Indirectly, the academic staff had to work hard to fulfill the aspirations of their respective IPT's. The duties of lecturers cover teaching and learning, and their duties increase by time to time as they also need to produce namely research and publications and as well as community service is also another additional item for the duties of lecturers (Abu Bakar, Othman & Ghani, 2021). In addition, almost all academic staff in IPTS have their side duties including clerical duties, management and also promoting their respective institutions. Compared to the academic staff at government sector, they only focus on teaching, research, consultancy and community service. This makes academic staff at IPTS depressed with tons of works.

Based on a study by Abdul Rashid (2022), 95.5 percent of lecturers from research universities show high levels of happiness. Compared to a study conducted by Tamilselvam (2021) among academic staff from private institutions of higher learning, most lecturers are dissatisfied with their jobs and cause them to experience job stress as a result of which the

manager's perception of the duties and responsibilities of lecturers is very low. Furthermore, less job satisfaction levels will cause job performance to plummet (Mokhtar & Saludin, 2021).

The two-factor of job satisfaction theory by Frederick Herzberg was proposed in 1959 (Che Pauziah 2001) and suitable for this study. The first factor is referred to as the motivator. It relates to positive feelings towards work and work-related things such as recognition, achievement, meaningful work, respect, development, and growth of the individual himself.

According to a study conducted by Wan Sulaiman, Mazlan and Abdullah (2023), turnover among academic staff, especially in private institutions of higher learning, is very worrying. This statement is further corroborated by a study from Ramasamy and Abudullah (2020), that the turnover rate of private higher education institutions in Malaysia is higher. The strongest factor contributing to turnover intentions is compensation. It is also supported by the findings of a study by Biltawi et al (2020), which detailed that the dimensions of job satisfaction such as working conditions and salary have a negative relationship with turnover intentions. Respondents with high levels of satisfaction with work, salary and supervisors showed low levels of turnover intention.

This study is also in line with a study conducted by Wazir and Jan (2020), which found that organizational commitment plays a role as a mediator in increasing job satisfaction and reducing turnover intentions. Undoubtedly, if employees feel high satisfaction at work, they will have less feeling to quit and find another job. However, it is also necessary to think about the factor of organizational commitment. Commitment is an aspect of responsibility that is born from every employee. It also exists in a number of circumstances. Thus, organizational commitment helps in influencing the relationship between job satisfaction and willingness to change. This means that the higher the organizational commitment that lecturers have, the higher their job satisfaction will be further reduced, which in turn reduces the intention of turnover or the desire of lecturers to quit and move to other organizations.

Outwardly, Muslims need to have the concept of *ihsan* in their work. This element is a reinforcing belief to be instilled in us how sincere we need to work and not just expect rewards. When we can achieve these attributes, we will try to relax with all the provisions and focus on ensuring that the organization we represent is always on a good track. The concept of courtesy can be equated with the nature of altruism which is one of the dimensions in an organization's Citizenship Behavior (Mokhtar et al, 2020). This is also supported in a study conducted again by Mokhtar et. al, 2021 & Mokhtar et. AL, 2022) which emphasizes that when employees have good altruism traits, it will help the organization's performance in a better direction. Altruism is a trait of helping a colleague without expecting anything in return.

Previous Studies

The Importance of the Concept Of Ihsan In Work

Islam is the religion of *syumul* or perfect which encompasses all things in a person's life. Perfection is inseparable from highlighting a noble personality and the best example in doing a job. In Islam, it is closer to being associated with the concept of *Ihsan*.

Hamzah (2017), explained that *Ihsan* means doing a job well, quality and perfectly. Syed Othman al-Habshi (1998), divides the meaning of *Ihsan* into three, the first is to act rightly, to

be benevolent, to have humanity and compassion. The second meaning is the feeling of fear that is born in a person by feeling that Allah is always watching him. Third, make a job in the best way and full of skills.

In a study by Mohd Ali and Puteh (2017), it is shown that the concept of *Ihsan* can have an impact on a person's work, especially when he is a Muslim. *Ihsan* will motivate employees in an organization by practicing good morals, pure character, working hard, and being responsible. In addition, Ali and Mahat (2020), provide the view that when the concept of *Ihsan* disappears in a person and an organization, the implications and impact on the individual himself and society are huge. It will lead to frustration, stress, laziness at work, suicidal tendencies, involvement with illegal substances, getting caught up in white-collar crime, corruption, discrimination, abuse of power and so on.

Al-Banna *et al* (2023), mentioned in their study that the noble value that is a priority in running an organization that should be present to managers and staff is the value of *Ihsan*. This is because it is closely related to an organisational management system that meets uniform and quality standards. The results of their research found that the concept of *Ihsan* in Islam is an important element in producing the best and effective organizational management.

A study by Mesran and Jakaria (2019), shows that there is a relationship between individual work performance and appreciation of *Ihsan's* values. It can be said to encompass management in all fields including the field of education. Therefore, the appreciation of the value of *Ihsan* in an educator will indirectly affect excellent and quality work performance. As such, the study of quality management systems that are related to *the Ihsan element* has become the focus of many researchers. This is because there is a strong correlation and relationship between the concept of quality management and the work performance of an organization.

In business organizations, especially in private learning sector, Permana *et al* (2021), argues that the concept of Total Quality Management is a commonly used concept to manage the quality of products and services comprehensively to improve organizational and business performance and customer satisfaction.

If the Islamic values are lost in a person, then there will be a lameness of the country and the deterioration of the organization as well as social damage that only looks at material elements. Therefore, the practice of quality management according to the Islamic way such as applying the element of *Ihsan* is something significant and important in the development of an organization or company itself. This is because all matters for the production of products or services are in line with the demands of sharia (Al-Banna *et al*, 2023).

In addition, the manager or the leader must always be ready to listen to complaints and obstacles from employees, and then try to solve the problem as soon as possible (Al-Banna *et al*, 2023). The method of meeting or *shura* together is highly encouraged as recommended by syarak through Surah Ali Imran verse 159. In fact, it is a necessity for an organization when facing a problem to discuss to achieve the best result. Sometimes, this method can minimize any weaknesses and repair existing gaps. Furthermore, according to Yusub (2015) through *shura* can also improve quality services to achieve customer satisfaction.

As for the level of employees, they are obliged to work sincerely and fulfill the mandate that has been entrusted by the employer as best as possible without delay and complete it carefully. Appreciation of work does not only meet the demands of the head or employer, but also aspires to seek the pleasure of Allah SWT (Yusoff, 2017). Studies prove that employees who practice Ihsan will be more motivated and be peaceful and responsible when carrying out their duties by considering it as a trust that will be questioned by Allah SWT in the hereafter (Aziz, Mokhtar & Aini, 2015).

When both parties, both employers and employees, embrace and practice the value of Ihsan during work, then the operation or movement of the organization will run smoothly in line with the goals that are aspired to be achieved. Nor Akrimi and Anuar (2017) added that the impact of *Ihsan* is so great in the organization because it can create an efficient and stable governance system for the community according to the mold of noble values in Islam.

Definition of the Concept of Ihsan According to Islamic Perspective

According to a study from Mokhtar et al (2020), the nature of altruism understood with the concept of human beings. Altruism is a dimension in the Concept of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Mokhtar et al, 2020). According to Gupta et al (2024), Organizational citizenship behavior has a relationship with work performance. Organizational citizenship behavior is an added value needed by employers to help the development of an organization (Puteh et al., 2021). This definition is very much in line with the concept of *ihsan* in the concept of *ihsan* which is translated in several Islamic scholar quotes. According to the concept of *ihsan* in the context of work, it is often associated with doing something with sincerity, seriousness, and kindness. It involves giving the best of ourselves in everything we do, without expecting rewards or praise from others. Here are some aspects of the concept of courtesy or altruism that can be applied in employment:

1. High Quality of Work: Doing each task with the best quality we can, regardless of whether others will see or appreciate the effort. Highlighting the life of a servant of Allah SWT as well as a caliph in the world, humans are given the responsibility of working as a test and it is an obligation to win in responding to the test. The trick is to carry out work at the best level. Allah says in Surah al-Mulk verse 2.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

He means: Who makes death and life, so that He may test you, who among you is better in deeds. And He is Mighty and Forgiving,
And Allah SWT also said in Surah al-Qasas verse 26

قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ

One of the two women said: "O my father, take him as the one who works (to us), for indeed the best person you take to work (to us) is a strong and trustworthy person."

Based on the sentence, it is clear that Ihsan in employment includes a high quality of work contained in it is to work at the best level and trust with every responsibility given.

2. Good Service: Islam is a religion that emphasizes good manners in communicating with each other, especially in daily life. In terms of work each individual must serve

customers, colleagues, and superiors with sincerity and respect, even when not monitored or observed. Said the Prophet.

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ صَغِيرَنَا وَ يُوقِّرْ كَبِيرَنَا

What it means: It is not among us that people do not love those who are younger than us and respect those who are older than us. [Narrated by al-Tirmizi (1919)] Imam al-Tirmizi considers this hadith to be *gharib*] [Imam al-Suyuthi considers this hadith to be authentic in *al-Jami'*.

In general, providing good service from the context of courtesy and altruism promotes mutual well-being as a result of a deep appreciation of manners in communication as well as being comfortable to offer help to colleagues in need without expecting anything in return, sharing knowledge and resources with colleagues in order to achieve goals without considering personal benefits alone.

3. Honesty and Integrity: Honesty and integrity are elements that must be paid attention by every individual (employee) under an organization. Appreciation of this element is very important because it is able to provide well-being to the staff of an organization. A staff member with integrity will have good behavior and will not be easily influenced by negative behaviors such as stealing, skipping work, taking overtime and others. This will have a positive impact not only on individuals but also on the organisations they join. Allah SWT said in surah al-Naml verses 39-40:

قَالَ عَفْرَيْتُ مَنْ الْجِنِّ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَقَامِكَ وَإِنِّي عَلِيَّةٌ لَقُويُّ أَمِينٌ قَالَ الَّذِي
عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ
هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي
عَزِيزٌ كَرِيمٌ

What he means: Said 'Ifrit (the cunning) of the jinn: "I will come to you by bringing the throne to you before you stand up from your seat; Indeed, I am really strong to bring it again to be trustworthy". A man who has knowledge from the Book said, "I will bring the throne to you before your eyes blink." So when Solomon saw the throne lying before him, he said: "This includes the gift of my Lord to test me whether I am grateful or deny (His favor). And whoever is grateful, he is indeed grateful for his own (goodness) and whoever disobeys, then indeed my Lord is the Richest and the Most Noble."

Although the jinn are labeled as disobedient creatures, the Quran explains that some of the jinn believe in Allah, even the ifrit among the jinn who lived during the time of the Prophet Sulaiman AS suggested to the Prophet to help move the throne of Queen Balqis. Ifrit promised to transfer in a short time and gave assurances that he could be trusted in carrying out the task. So, it is clear to every human being that it is important to inculcate elements of honesty and integrity especially in work. Act with honesty and integrity in all workplace interactions, even if it is difficult or directly unprofitable.

4. Positive Attitude and Kindness: Spreading a positive spirit in the workplace, providing support to colleagues in difficult situations, and treating everyone with respect and kindness.

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Means; And do not cause damage to the earth, after it has been repaired and pray to Him with fear and hope. Indeed, Allah's mercy is very close to those who do good.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا اِسْرَائِيْلُ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتِيْ الَّتِيْ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاَيُّ فَضْلِنُكُمْ عَلٰى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

Means: O Children of Israel, remember My favor that I have bestowed upon you and that I have blessed you over all people.

اِنْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ لٰنَفْسِكُمْ وَاِنْ اَسَاۤءْتُمْ فَلَهَا فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ لَيَسُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ وَلَيَدْخُلُوْا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوْهُ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلَيُتَّبَرُوْا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيْرًا

Means; If you do good you do good for yourself and if you do evil, then it is for yourself, and when the second punishment comes, we will bring others to smear your faces and they will enter the mosque, just as your enemies entered it the first time and to destroy once and for all that they have mastered.

فَاِذَا بَلَغْنَ اٰجَلَهُنَّ فَاَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ فَارُقُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ وَاَشْهَدُوْا ذَوِيْ عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ وَاَقِيْمُوْا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلّٰهِ ذٰلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهٖۤ مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلٰى اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهٗۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ جَعَلَ لِلّٰهِ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا

He said: When they are nearing the end of their iddah, then refer to them well or let them go well and witness with two just witnesses among you and you should establish the testimony for Allah's sake. Thus a teaching is given to those who believe in Allah and the Hereafter. Whoever fears Allah will surely provide him with a way out. And gave him sustenance from an unexpected direction. And whoever puts his trust in Allah will surely provide for his (needs). Indeed, Allah carries out His affairs. Indeed, Allah has made provisions for everything.

فَلَا يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيْثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ فَاْتَقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰۤاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ

Say: "There is no evil equal to good, even though the abundance of bad attracts your heart, then fear Allah, O people of understanding, that you may have good fortune."

5. Cooperation and openness in interacting with fellow humans. Sharing our knowledge and experience with colleagues, as well as providing support and assistance to them without expecting rewards. Allah SWT says in Surah al-Ma'idah verse 2.

وَتَعَاوَنُوْا عَلٰى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰىۗ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوْا عَلٰى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ

He means: And help you in virtue and piety and do not help in committing sin and transgression. And fear Allah, indeed, Allah is very severe in His punishment.

This verse emphasizes the importance of cooperation in doing good (al-birr) and piety. It teaches that cooperation built on the principles of goodness and piety will bring blessings and success. Allah SWT also said in Surah al-Baqarah verse 286.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۗ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ ۗ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا ۗ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إِكْرَامًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ۗ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ ۗ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَارْحَمْنَا ۗ أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

He means: Allah does not burden a person but according to his ability. He gets the reward (of virtue) that he works for and he gets the punishment (of evil) that he does. (They prayed): "O our Lord, do not punish us if we forget or we make mistakes. O our Lord, do not burden us with a heavy burden as You have on those before us. O our Lord, do not give us what we cannot bear. Forgive us; forgive us; and have mercy on us. You are our Helper, so help us against the disbelievers."

This verse teaches about openness and honesty in dealing with God. It teaches that God does not burden a person beyond the limits of his ability. In the context of human interaction, this principle can be interpreted as the importance of communicating openly and honestly, and not placing a heavy burden on others.

These two verses illustrate the values of cooperation and openness in Islam, which are an important foundation in the context of courtesy in work, especially in order to establish healthy and harmonious relationships with fellow human beings in life.

6. Take full responsibility for our tasks and responsibilities at work, and be ready to take the necessary initiatives and actions to get the job done well. Allah SWT said in Surah al-Nisa verse 135.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ۗ إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۗ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا ۗ وَإِنْ تَلَوُّوا أَوْ نَعَرْتُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

He said: O you who believe, be the ones who uphold (the truth) for Allah's sake, be a just witness. And never let your hatred of a race encourage you to act unjustly. Be just, because justice is closer to piety. Fear Allah, for indeed Allah is Knowing, what you are doing."

This verse emphasizes the importance of being a person who upholds the truth, acts justly, and is responsible in the tasks given. This includes responsibility to oneself, family, and society as a whole. A believer is required to be responsible for his actions, not only to himself, but also to Allah and fellow humans.

In the context of daily life, this verse teaches that every individual has a moral responsibility to act with justice, to take the right and good action, and to account for his or her actions before God.

It can be concluded that the value of altruism and the concept of courtesy actually teach values such as empathy, kindness, and social responsibility. By practicing these principles in

the work environment, we can form a work culture that is inclusive, mutually supportive, and oriented towards the common good as well as realizing the Islamic will of being the most outstanding employee because the job is worship and the excellent human being is the best human being.

Conclusion

In work, a worker should need to have the nature of ihsan or altruism. This trait is an added value that needs to exist and benefit the employer. According to Khaerunisah et al (2021), workers who are willing to give wholeheartedly without expecting anything in return for the organization to move forward is one of the components of altruism. This aspect is important in the organization's efforts to keep moving forward and always expect high productivity among employees. According to Mokhtar and Saludin (2021), the field of education is one of the most challenging fields in our country. This field of education urges lecturers to provide additional behaviour to help organisations achieve the best level, especially lecturers in private institutes of higher learning (IPTS). Among the required behaviors that need to exist today is of course the Organizational Citizenship Behavior. According to Shaikh Mohd Salleh (2020), Ihsan in the context of employment refers to performing duties perfectly and with kindness. This concept involves fulfilling the rights of all parties involved, including employers (companies), workers (employees), colleagues, customers, and other stakeholders relevant to the field of work. In addition, ihsan is not only about doing the job well, but also about paying attention to the kindness and well-being of everyone involved.

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