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Lessons for 21st Century Organizations**

Nazia Rafiq
Abdus Sattar Abbasi

Department of Management Sciences
COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

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Cultural Diversity and Islamic Traditions: Lessons for 21st Century Organizations

¹Nazia Rafiq, ²Abdus Sattar Abbasi

¹Department of Management Sciences, Virtual University of Pakistan, Email: madamnazia@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

²Department of Management Sciences, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Email: drabdussattar@ciitlahore.edu.pk

Abstract

Islam is the religion of peace and submission. It impulses all Muslims to accomplish best moral values at work place. The purpose of this paper is to present cultural diversity as part of Islamic traditions. This paper intends to achieve valuable lessons for 21st century organizations in the light of Islamic traditions of managing human capital and other resources. The literature presented in this paper is based on Holy Quran, the Hadith and Islamic manifestations. The study revealed that Islam has beautiful examples and lessons on managing cultural diversity which are beneficial for today's organizations. This knowledge would be useful for both Muslim and non-Muslim managers to apply Islamic approach towards managing cultural diversity. This study is relatively unique as it explores several dimensions of cultural diversity with respect to the religion.

Keywords: *Islam, Cultural Diversity, Islamic Traditions*

Introduction

Cultural diversity is existence of different cultures as compare to single culture prevailing. It refers to respect the differences existed in each other's culture. Islam means the obedience before Allah's aspiration. Islam debates loudly about cultural diversity. Islamic traditions have embedded with beautiful examples and incidents about managing diversity. The Islamic culture has dealt with diversity in a great manner. It is a culture of Knowledge, skills, expertise and creativity. Within large Islamic world, the presence of different culture, languages, civilizations and their co- existence advocates that it offers culture of patience and peace. Quran indicates that cultural diversity and variation in ideas are ordinary in social life and it is implanted in humanity (Kamali, 1994). The Quran says "The believers are brothers so make adjustment between them"

(al-Quran, 49:10). Islam gives the lesson of peace. The Quran says “Not killed the life which Allah has prohibited except by right” (al- Quran, 17:33). The Quran clearly focuses on pluralism dimension of culture here but honors the freedom of personal thoughts among individuals and nations. The Quran clearly attests that different cultures can benefit from each other by sharing different knowledge, skills and experiences and having pluralistic vision of life (Kamali, 1994).

An enormous research has been already conducted on cultural diversity, its challenges and benefits. Researches are available on HRM practices, its functions and its relationship with Islam. But limited research found on diversity from Islamic perspective while Islam fully supports and endorse diversity around human existence.

Research Objectives and Significance

The objective of this paper is to analyze the Islamic perspective of diversity. This paper is also intended to identify its implications for future organizations. The research is a unique piece of paper which is beneficial for all managers (both Muslim and Non-Muslim). Current study highlights benefits of diversity in true sense from Islamic perspective. This study will be useful for Islamic world as well as western community to understand dynamics of Islamic teachings to understand potential of diversity for modern organizations. Current study frequently refers to Quranic verses to draw diversity lessons. This will not only be significant from religious point of view but also from practical standpoint because religion triggers numerous practices in personal and organizational life of an individual.

Methodology

This is a conceptual paper. The paper reviews the relevant literature on diversity from an Islamic perspective portraying the boundary between ideals and practices of diversity in Islam in order to fill the gap in existing literature. It is a qualitative study. It is based on literature review. It is mainly derived from Quran, hadith and Islamic history.

Analysis of Literature

Syed (2008) in his study investigated activities to suggest a Pakistani model of diversity management that is in accordance with unique culture of Pakistan but his area was limited to a single country and he has not related it with the religion. Syed and Ali (2010) investigated

normative view of Islam in maintaining employment relations but their area of study was not the cultural diversity particularly. Mellahi and Budhwar (2010) in a study related Islam with human resource management practices recommended that more research is required to understand the role of Islam at workplace. They recommended that further research is necessary to investigate that how Islamic cultures, norms and values contribute to work place environment and organizational performance. Beekun et al. (2012) have conducted a research on practical wisdom for management embedded in Islam which concluded that Islamic culture is rich in every walk of life. Current study responds to these calls and attempts to investigate the Islamic cultural diversity and tried to derive lessons for future organizations.

The article is organized as follows. Initially it will explore the cultural diversity and Islamic traditions. It will, then, provide the lessons for future organization of 21st century.

Cultural Diversity and Islamic Traditions

Diversity has many hidden and unhidden benefits in it for mankind that's why Allah has created every one different from each other. As per Quran, it is the known to the Allah that differences will occur otherwise he was having the power to create all manhood as one community (al-Quran, 11: 118).

The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) in his last sermon at his Farewell Pilgrimage which is a charter of equality and diversity provided some lessons (Latif, 2004). Below is the translation of his last sermon;

“All mankind is from Adam and Eve, There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab and for a non-Arab over an Arab, nor for the white over the black nor for the black over the white except in God-consciousness. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not therefore do injustice to yourselves”. “O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness”.

It is clear from above passage that Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) has denied all kind of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, social class, age and gender. Quran said that all human beings are one nation. As per Quran, all mankind is created from one male and one female and distributed into tribes and nations, so that all must know each other. But the most respectful is the one who is having fear for God means who abides all the rules and regulations (al-Quran, 49: 13).

The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) loudly said that believers are just like the building blocks, all of which support each other. After explaining he demonstrated it by mingling all his fingers into one another (Sahih Muslim). He emphasized on the teamwork and having good peer relationships.

The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) never negotiated on his moral standard even behaving with non-Muslims. He was famous as Sadiq and Amin. His attitude towards non-Muslims was so impressive that he was considered as “Trust worthy” personality by them. Once He climbed on a mount and said Quaraishis if He says that enemy is behind them will they believe. All collectively and loudly spoke that they will surely believe it as all know that He never told a lie.

The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) always protected justice, advocated the Poor and weak and moreover focused on family rights. The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) always requested Muslims to treat non-Muslims with great love. Once He sent Hazrat Muaz (RA) as governor of Yamen and advised him that “Evade being annoying by the hurt, because there is no fence between their obscenity and that of Allah” (ShahiBukhari).

Islamic rules not only apply on Muslims even they are for all humanity. The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) always strived for the basic human rights of every one living in the society. He always protected the rights of minorities. He asked that “He who plagues non-Muslims plagues the Herald of Allah. Therefore, he who plagues the Herald of Allah plagues Allah”. It was only his attitude and behaviors towards non-Muslims that he was able to spread Islam everywhere. He was listened by all other minorities as well who accepted Islam afterwards despite initially they opposed him.

The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) was great admirer of knowledge and he always focused on transfer of knowledge. He was so determined towards non-Muslims for acquiring knowledge.

For Example after Badar war he announces that prisoners can get relief if they can impart reading and writing to 10 Muslim kids. He always kept moral relations with Jews and other communities throughout his stay in Medina. He anticipated that no harm can exist by living of all communities together as every community can provide something beneficial to the society. Medina Treaty is an example of living all the groups together in peace.

The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) strived a lot on rights of human kind. Once he stopped before a funeral of Non-Muslim and when he was asked by a companion that the funeral is of Non-Muslim. He replied emphasizing the superiority of a human being and focused that Non-Muslims also have a soul. He always respected the mankind despite of having different faith, ideas and life styles. He greatly believed that all the humans have life and soul irrespective of their religion, language and culture.

The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) always provided individual attention to everybody instead of exhibiting the collective approach to everyone. He identified the individual strength of every body and achieved individual benefit from every one. Islam emphasizes that all are not equal in capacities, capabilities and skills to each other and everyone will be provided burden according to his own capability (Ali, 2010). As per Quran no one is burdened more which he cannot raise (al-Quran, 2:233).

Though, education which is well-matched with the concept of human reality is founded on proposition that humans are able to make a differentiating edge to society. Regardless of Individual differences Islam has emphasis on human development which is competent and professional at work place (Ali, 2005).

Islam discourages the discrimination based on social class and status. Quran clearly forbids that. As per Quran the believers are not allowed to go injustice and hurt anyone. It enforces believers to persistently have faith on Allah who only likes justice and the one nearer to Him is the only one who practices this virtue (al-Quran, 5: 8).

Organizations don't need to finalize rules and regulations based on ethnicity, race, favoritism and nepotism. As per Quran one of the two female quoted to their fathers that employ that person who is competent and trust worthy only. It means criteria for hiring must be competency and professionalism irrespective of racism (al-Quran, 28:26). The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad

(PBUH) always has emphasis on hiring of competent staff and advised to avoid favoritism and nepotism. He said that who believes on discrimination and favoritism is harming his community. Further he said that “He who was in hiring position and selected that person who is not qualified to manage others, he challenges the God and his Messenger’s order. And such a person who appoints an unskilled person over others due to any kinship will be irritating by God” (Ali, 2010). Further Hazrat Omer (RA), second caliph, who was a great administrator highlighted the importance of behavior, attitude and performance potential of candidate as key indicators while hiring for a position. He reported that if a person hires someone on the basis of nepotism he cheats Allah, The Prophet and Public”(Ali, 2010). According to Islamic wisdoms, human mixture is a heavenly project. It is not allowed to distinguish on the basis of race, gender, color of skin and other qualities (Latif, 2014). The Quran forbids the gender discrimination. As per Quran, whether the believer is a male or female will go to paradise irrespective of gender if they commit respectable manners and they will not be victimized (al-Quran, 3: 195). Further it explains that Lord responded to its believers that I will never permit to lose the work of any employee among you either male or female and all are of one another (al-Quran, 4:124).

Hazrat Khadija (RA) was a business woman and is a beautiful example of working women. She managed her household along with domestic activities. She was a constant source of financial support for Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) (Minai, 1981). She is a valuable case study for today’s Muslim women. It may be noted that Hazrat Khadija (RA) and other prominent women of the early Islamic era were able to have an active presence in public space despite the fact that they were, compared to other Muslim women, subject to stricter norms of modesty. Muslim scholars in general agree that consistent with the Quranic injunctions, the wives of the Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) adhered to a strict modesty and dress code, and yet it is acknowledged that they led prominent lives in which they contributed much to their societies. In other words, the above role models’ presence and participation in public space was not (mis)interpreted by men in their era as a violation of Islamic female modesty. Likewise Hazrat Omer (RA) appointed Hazrat Shaffa Bint Abdullah (RA) as marketing Manager in Medina (El-Fadl, 2014). The Quran reveals that decent activities will be rewarded equally irrespective of gender.

The Quran again and again stresses that believers must remember that all are created being companions (al-Quran, 51:49). Further it explained that glorious is the one who created all of us in couples from the earth and grew with in it and from which one can never know (al-Quran, 36:36). It imposes that all human beings are born equal. The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) advised Muslims to have piety on each other as no one is better if having red or black skin rather having mercy (Shahi Muslim).

The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) once replied to Bedouin, in response of the question that when doomsday will become, that when honesty will be lost and honesty will be lost when unfit persons will be the custodian of power and authority (Beekun, 1996). In Islam ethics are also important and essence of any business. On one is allowed to go against honesty. The Quran focuses Muslims to always go for full measure and never do dishonesty by over or under measurement (al-Quran, 26:181). Islam believes in equilibrium. It enforces its believers to always weight in balance (al-Quran, 26:181). Further it believes on rewarding people their due and it restricts its believers to deprive anyone from his deserving reward and flourish dishonesty (al-Quran, 26:181).

Islam provides management by examples and make sure that everyone is getting respect regardless of social class. It can help organizations to build competitive advantage.

Once a woman from a rich family theft some valuable and Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) ordered to cut her hand as punishment. Some persons requested Him not to give her punishment as she is from Quraish, a noble family. The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) came into anger and announced that if Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad found to stealing she got same punishment as of that lady. He further explained that earlier nations destroyed only because they do the same. If some influential person committed the sin, he was considered excusable and person from lower class got punishment (Shahi Bukhari).

Lessons for 21st century Organization

Islamic culture provides some valuable lessons while managing cultural diversity. Today all are living in a global village and all mankind are human beings irrespective of religion and race. Human beings should interact with other human beings in a brother hood manner. Islamic

traditions are evident that it has the culture of knowledge. In 21st century all are diverse operative organizations. Here is the table which summarizes some lessons useful for future organizations.

Sr.	Quote on Diversity	Lesson derived for Diverse Organizations
1	“The believers are brothers so make adjustment between them”	Conflict management is essence of work place.
2	“Not killed the life which Allah has prohibited except by right”	Human Life is important.
3	“O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted”	Communication and interaction is important.
4	“Verily in the sight of Allah, the most honoured amongst you is the one who is most God-fearing”.	Everyone must abide the rules and regulations at workplace. Focus is on best performance.
5	“All mankind is from Adam and Eve, There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab and for a non-Arab over an Arab, nor for the white over the black nor for the black over the white except in God-consciousness. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not therefore do injustice to yourselves”.	All are human beings irrespective of race. There is equal opportunity for everyone. Everyone must remain peaceful. Focus is on Protection of every one’s property.
6	“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. If they abide	Focus is on gender Equality. Both genders have rights over each other.

	by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness”.	
7	“The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, Believers are like the different parts of a building, each one supporting the other. Then he demonstrated what he meant by interlocking his fingers”.	Team work is important. Team work will produce good results.
8	“Evade being annoying by the hurt, because there is no fence between their obscenity and that of Allah”	Have piety and mercy for co-workers.
9	“He who plagues non-Muslims plagues the Herald of Allah. Therefore, he who plagues the Herald of Allah plagues Allah.”	Remain peaceful at work place.
10	“No person is charged with more than his capacity”.	Everyone must be assigned reasonable workload.
11	“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah , witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness”	Discrimination is not suitable at work place.
12	“One of the two women said, 'O my father'. Employ him'. Undoubtedly, the best employee is he who is strong (Competent) and trustworthy”.	There must be no hiring discrimination.
13	“He who was in hiring position and selected that person who is not qualified to manage others he challenges the God and his Messenger’s order. And such a person who appoints an unskilled person over others due to any kinship will be irritating by God”.	Always avoid favoritism.
14	And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed.”	Avoid genderdiscrimination.
15	“And their Lord responded to them, "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether	Reward according to the performance to employees

	male or female; you are of one another”.	irrespective of gender.
16	And of all things We created two mates; perhaps you will remember”	Avoid gender discrimination.
17	“And their Lord responded to them, "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another”	Avoid gender discrimination.
18	“You are not better than people with red or black skins unless you excel them in piety.”	Avoid racism.
19	“Give full measure and do not be of those who cause loss”.	Practice honesty in business.
20	“And do not deprive people of their due and do not commit abuse on earth, spreading corruption”.	Practice peace at workplace.

The lessons for future organization are that they must manage diversity as it will increase the productivity, honesty, trust, performance of workers. Organizations must avoid gender discrimination, and racism at work place. Organizations can learn lesson that they avoid hiring discrimination and never promote favoritism at work place and respect culture of one another.

Conclusion and Discussion

The study concludes that Islam wisely sheds light on diversity. Islam expects its believers to live in peace. Islam prohibits any kind of racial, generational, cultural, social and gender discrimination. Islam equally supports human rights of every one regardless of religion. Islam has given many beneficial lessons in managing diversity for future organizations. It is concluded that Islamic culture is based on pluralism, less power distant and focusing on long term orientation.

Hamada (2004) in her study regarding ICTs and cultural diversity concluded that western countries don't have pluralism and patience while networking with other cultures especially towards Islamic culture. She further emphasized that Pluralism, cultural and linguistic diversity are part of Islamic Charter from very beginning. She concluded that if Islam is studied deeply it

always struggled for peaceful presence of humankind. This research is also contributing that world can take benefit if manage the diversity in Islamic perspective.

El Garahet.al (2012) in the study regarding practical wisdom for managementresolute thatIslam is rich in its cultural diversityanda study must be conducted on its business impact in multifaceted working atmosphere. The study further suggested that study must be conducted on the global business enterprise where not only the leaders but also the all level is included in decision making. Current study is adding more contribution by providing useful lessons for future organizations.

Hashim (2010) in his study determined that Islam provides managers an effective way to understand people.He enforced mangers that they must know Islamic approach to manage people. He said that HRM practices of Islam are equally useful for Muslim employees to understand their non-Muslim coworker at workplace. Current Study is extended beyond the study of HRM to manage people along with diversity and equally addressing Muslim and Non-Muslim Managers.

Predictions for female employment in Multinational companies are not overallunwelcoming.Islamic activists have contended for the necessity to unread patriarchy from the Quranic Clarifications (Syed, 2010). Current study is compatible in the sense that it also focuses on female employment and it prohibits gender based discrimination at workplace. Presently Islam is globally generalized and it is suggested that both Muslims and Non-Muslims understand the diversity on the basis of Islam.

Practical studies showed in several countries endorsed that Muslim employees have high work ethics (Syed, 2010).This study also presented Islamic Perspective that ethics are the essence of any workplace.

Limitations and Future Research

The research is qualitative in nature and is based on literature available in relation with cultural diversity. Future research can be conducted to make a comparison of eastern society and western society regarding diversity managementpractices.

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