

## Towards an Islamic model of work motivation

Akram Abdul Cader\*

**Abstract:** Optimal motivation (*al-himmah al-‘āliyyah*) is an important concept in Islamic psychology. Current Islamic models predominantly focus on integration with Western theories. This study proposes a synthesised model of Islamic motivation through an interpretive approach of Islamic theological texts (Qur’ān and Sunnah), classical Islamic works, and a systematic analysis of Western academic research. Islamic work motivation focuses on states of the *nafs* (self): *al-nafs al-muṭma’innah* (tranquil), *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* (self-reproaching), and *al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū’* (inclined to evil). *Tawhīd* (monotheism), mediated by sincerity and Sunnah compliance, drives *īmān* (belief). Optimal motivation is a result of strengthened *īmān* moderated by knowledge, patience, reliance, piety, encouragement, and admonishment. The resultant action, integrated with a rewards/punishment system, yields motivated behaviour. Motivated behaviour is classified in three behavioural types: *ẓālim li-nafsih* (self-oppressive), *muqtaṣid* (moderate), and *sābiq bi-al-khayrāt* (foremost in good). Optimal motivation is the state of tranquillity where the individual sincerely strives towards good action. The model provides practitioners with a model that can be used to manage motivation and provides researchers a comprehensive framework of Islamic motivation.

**Keywords:** Islamic motivation; motivation; religiosity; spirituality; work motivation.

**Abstrak:** Motivasi yang optimal (*al-himmah al-‘āliyyah*) merupakan konsep yang penting dalam psikologi Islam. Model-model Islam terkini memberi tumpuan sebahagian besarnya terhadap mengintegrasikannya dengan teori-teori Barat. Kajian ini mencadangkan satu model yang telah disintesis untuk motivasi secara Islam melalui pendekatan interpretif terhadap teks-teks teologi

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\* Akram Abdul Cader is the Director of Education at the San Mateo County Medical Center in San Mateo, California, USA.  
Email: [akram.abdulcader@gmail.com](mailto:akram.abdulcader@gmail.com).

Islam (al-Qur'an dan Sunnah), kerja-kerja tentang Islam klasik, dan satu analisis yang sistematik terhadap penyelidikan akademik dari Barat. Motivasi kerja bercorak Islam memfokuskan terhadap kedudukan nafs (kendiri): al-nafs al-muṭma'innah (ketenangan), al-nafs al-lawwāmah (teguran diri), dan al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū' (kecenderungan kepada kejahatan). Tawhīd diselesaikan oleh keikhlasan dan pematuhan Sunnah, iaitu pemacu īmān (kepercayaan). Motivasi yang optimal terhasil daripada mengukuhkan Iman yang dikendalikan melalui pengetahuan, kesabaran, kepergantungan kepada Tuhan, ketakwaan, nasihat-menasihati, dan teguran. Tindakannya terhasil melalui integrasi system ganjaran ataupun hukuman. Hal ini dapat melahirkan perlakuan yang bermotivasi. Perlakuan yang bermotivasi diklasifikasikan kepada tiga jenis perlakuan: zālim li-nafsih (penindasan terhadap diri sendiri), muqtaṣid (kesederhanaan), dan sābiq bi-al-khayrāt (yang terbaik sekali). Motivasi yang optimal merupakan satu keadaan yang tenang yang mana seseorang individu tersebut secara ikhlas berusaha ke arah tindakan yang baik. Model tersebut menyediakan peramal-peramal satu model yang dapat digunakan untuk mengurus motivasi serta menyediakan satu rangkakerja bagi motivasi secara Islam.

**Kata Kunci:** Motivasi secara Islam; motivasi; keagamaan; kerohanian; motivasi kerja.

Motivation is widely discussed across multiple disciplines (Abdulcader & Anthony, 2014; Kroth, 2007; Latham, 2011). The desire to understand work motivation has led researchers and practitioners to discuss how motivation is shaped and how it affects individuals, teams, and societies in relation to work environments (Frey & Oserloh, 2002; Hayashi, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Studying motivation has been vital in behavioural development for nearly a century. Early studies in motivation indicate that a person's action is influenced by a complex system of neurochemical responses within the nervous system that operates through a feedback-based mechanism to stimulate action (Hull, 1935; Seward, 1956). Latham (2011) noted that motivation studies emerged in the 1900s as biological research and evolved into behavioural psychology. Gollwitzer and Oettingen (2001) maintained that the behavioural connections of motivation are linked to biological needs. Motivation is not the solitary source of behaviour; studies often extend inquiry to causation, cognition, and factor analyses. Researchers in behavioural psychology have studied motivational effects on needs and developed theories that form the cornerstone of studies in motivation. Freud laid a foundation in the life and death instincts theory (Latham, 2011). Since

then, studies of motivation introduced numerous factors that were said to affect behaviour. Numerous theories in physiology, psychology, and cognition emerged as a result of these behavioural investigations.

Traditionally, work motivation has been viewed in light of the extrinsic factors that influence behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, researchers have emphasised intrinsic motivation for human behavioural development (Abdulcader & Anthony, 2014; Frey & Oserloh, 2002). While there are numerous factors that affect motivation, religiosity has been found to influence an individual's behaviour (Sangari & Mirzaian, 2012). Miller and Delaney (2005) reasoned that the dialog between cognitive science and religion provides clarity to intrinsic motivation and behaviour. The study of religion and motivation dates back nearly a century with studies on biblical texts, spirituality, and the self (Pinard, 1959; Tuttle, 1942). Considering the increasing rate of globalisation and exposure to various cultures and religions, researchers have been investigating the influences of religion on work motivation.

While numerous studies focus on religiosity and spirituality, few researchers have focused on Islam and workplace motivation. Islam is arguably the “fastest growing religion”, and undoubtedly an influential religion that encompasses 23.2% of the world's population (Pew Research Center, 2015). The purpose of studying Islamic motivation is to investigate how Islamic teachings can drive work motivation among Muslims. Islam governs all aspects of a Muslim's life. A Muslim is mandated to work for *ḥalāl* (permissible) sustenance and he is closely regulated by Islamic principles (Ali, 2009). Therefore, Muslims are required to act according to religious constraints that facilitate their work motivation. For centuries, Muslims relied on religious scholars to guide their understanding of right and wrong. Thereby, motivation was driven through religious understanding. Islamic scholarship in the past thousand years discussed the religious regulatory nature of work and motivators. Little of this scholarship, however, has been translated from the Islamic worldview to academic literature. Ali (2009) argued that throughout Islamic history, motivation stems from a psychological, physiological, social, and spiritual basis. He cited Ibn Khaldūn's notes on how managing motivation results in mutual benefits for individuals and society (Ibn Khaldūn, 1989). Islamic scholarship has preceded well established theories of motivation that have been utilised in the study of management effectiveness for decades. For instance, Choudhury (1999)

pointed out that the 12th century Muslim philosopher, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, preceded Maslow in his needs theory. Choudhury, however, noted that al-Rāzī's hierarchy begins with fulfilment of obedience to Allah and is a continuum as opposed to a hierarchy. The discussion on human motivation has taken place in Islamic scholarship for centuries, yet has rarely been represented in Western academic discussion on Islamic motivation.

The need for observing motivating factors through Islam is emphasised by the growing spirituality in the workplace among Muslims (Sangari & Mirzaian, 2012). While the need for research into Islamic influence on work motivation is well-established (DiClemente & Delaney, 2005), Alaweneh (1998) stated that few studies are dedicated to this topic. Since his study on Islamic motivation in 1998, little effort has been made to integrate the discussions to create a holistic Islamic model of work motivation. Proper understanding of the Islamic motivation model provides practitioners with insight into the strategic development of employee-work motivation among Muslims. While Islamic scholarship dates back over 1400 years, few researches integrated this work in their models. The results of motivation research in Islam are far reaching across the billion and a half Muslims who ascribe to the faith. Islamic motivation studies published in the English language have only begun to emerge during the late 70s. There has not been a significant increase in the number of Islamic motivation models since then. Unfortunately, the majority of current Islamic models modify existing Western theories to fit the Islamic context. Integrating Western models into Islamic contexts is problematic because it does not take into regard the uniqueness of the Islamic influence on behaviour and perspectives of the self. In other words, Islam provides a unique spiritual perspective of the relationship of motivators and the self, which Western models do not capture.

Integrating Islamic models of motivation with Western theories hinders efforts to develop a unique Islamic model of motivation. Only a fraction of studies investigated Islamic motivation solely through Islamic concepts. The current trends in Western research discuss Islamic work motivation based on individual motivators or the self (*nafs*). Existing Islamic models lack the synergies of an integrated approach that can be applied without isolation of Islamic motivators from the self (*nafs*). A true Islamic model integrates an intrinsic system of beliefs

with extrinsic rewards and punishments; this study aims to propose such a model. There has not been a synthesised model of Islamic motivation that integrates the levels of the self and its relationship with Islamic motivators, moderators and mediators with the understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Ali and Al-Owaihyan (2008) postulated that Islam provides a unique view on work motivation. Multiple researchers have expounded on the importance of studying Islamic motivation and conceptualising a model to improve management practice (Abdulcader & Anthony, 2014; Ahmad, 2009; Alawneh, 1998; Ali, 2009; Ali & Al-Owaihyan, 2008; Baqutayan, 2012; Zaman et al., 2013).

This conceptual paper provides an overview of Islamic motivation by examining Islamic principles that influence a Muslim's motivation in the management context. It also provides a synthesised model based on existing research and classic Islamic texts. The alternative synthesised approach outlined in this study shifts the discussion of Islamic motivation in Western studies to the Islamic interpretation of the *nafs* and how it is affected by motivated behaviour (outcome of actions) and the rewards/punishments system. This study begins by critically discussing existing models of Islamic work motivation. It then synthesises them through textual analysis of classical Islamic literature. This study will address two research objectives:

RO1: Identify directions of past research in Western academics on Islamic models of work motivation.

RO2: Discuss a potential integration of existing studies with classical Islamic literature into a synthesised Islamic model of motivation.

This paper extends the theoretical paradigm of Islamic work motivation in several ways. First, it re-evaluates the interactions of the self (*nafs*) through classical Islamic literature and its relationship to motivated behaviour (outcomes of actions). The study discusses a relationship between behavioural characteristics and the self. Second, considering the few studies on Islamic work motivation, this paper adds to the discussion by critically analysing Islamic literature and proposing an integrated model. When viewed in the traditional perspective, current models add Islamic belief as a motivator but do not comprehensively address the Islamic system of motivation and its relationship to the self. This study proposes outcomes of actions (motivated behaviour) as a

dependent variable interdependent with the rewards/punishment system based on *Ahādīth* (al-Bukhārī, 81:6493) related to judging acceptability of actions. The paper concludes by reassessing the relationships of constructs within the model; it discusses the implications of this to practice. This paper, therefore, applies an interpretive approach by integrating existing models through textual analyses of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions to propose a synthesised model of motivation from an Islamic perspective.

### **Religion and work motivation**

Management is a systematic process of creating and ensuring a work environment where employees can efficiently complete designated tasks to meet organisational goals. Fifty years of research has solidified the relationship between work motivation and management (Abdulcader & Anthony, 2014). While the work environment is rapidly changing due to various factors, such as technology, work attitudes are evolving due to increased religiosity (Ather, Khan, & Hoque, 2011). Management of work motivation takes place when an individual attempts to use the factors of influence to drive a person's motivation to improve performance and efficiency. Kanwar, Singh, and Kodwani (2009) argued that a high rate of organisational turnover is likely due to low motivation. For this reason, the concept of work motivation has been thoroughly studied in the business environment. Traditionally, extrinsic factors and incentives were strongly correlated with motivation among practitioners. Incentives, such as compensation, are often regarded as the most effective motivator (Hayashi, 2007). Intrinsic variables can be categorised into three types: (1) needs, (2) cognition, and (3) reinforcement or self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators create a variable level of motivation within an individual (Kroth, 2007).

Frey and Osterloh (2002) argued that due to the influence of intrinsic motivation, the isolation of extrinsic motivation in organisational strategy is detrimental to success. Studies have shown that intrinsic motivators are significant contributors to work motivation (Kroth, 2007). Tietjen and Myers (1998) focused on the subjective nature of values and the objective nature of needs. They linked job satisfaction to motivation and showed that needs are not the same as values. Zaman et al. (2013) corroborated this stating that religious values are a major component to intrinsic motivation. Ather et al. (2011) noted that motivation is a

critical aspect of both Islamic and traditional management. In both cases, motivation and management are closely linked to performance and satisfaction. It is imperative to consider the influence of spirituality in work motivation. Leonard et al. (1999) argued the need for incorporating the self in development of work motivation.

Gallup and Lindsay (1999) asserted that spirituality is the cornerstone to existence among religious individuals. Undoubtedly, religiosity and the self are determinants of motivation within an organisation. There is a growing interest among researchers and practitioners in investigating spiritual variables that build intrinsic motivation. Tuttle (1942) argued that religious beliefs play a practical role in controlling the factors that influence motivation. He noted that religious experience develops behaviours that create unique individual values. Religious experience, Tuttle explained, is analysed through beliefs, feelings, and standards of conduct. He concluded that these three factors are not diametrically opposed to traditional concepts of motivators. Thereby, religion is a determining factor of motivation for individuals that have a high level of spirituality. Rettinger and Jordan's (2005) study of 150 students at an undergraduate level found that students with higher religiosity were more motivated to avoid cheating. Their study implies that religious values impose stronger drivers to behaviour. While the concept of the universality of values has been narrated as a norm, Weir (2011) contended that religious values in religions such as Islam negate that idea. This is due to the uniqueness found in certain values propagated by various faiths that are not shared. For instance, obedience to authorities is a variable that Weir cited as a unique practice of Islam that is not theologically a shared value.

Park, Edmondson, and Hale-Smith (2013) argued that religion is rooted in the meaning-system of motivation. They stated that individuals use religion as a way to find significant meaning for work, foster control in their environments, and reduce uncertainty. This behavioural guidance, they observed, is a highly functional and influential system. DiClemente and Delaney (2005) noted significant influence on human behaviour and motivation in their study of Judeo-Christian religious values. They concluded that the science of motivation can benefit from the study of religious texts. Their study showed that there is a high-level of influence when an individual has a strong connection to their religion, often referring to religious values to justify actions. They suggested

that this type of study should also be conducted on strongly influential religions, citing Islam as one of the top choices.

### **Methodology**

A two-tier approach was used to achieve the research objectives of this study. Tier-one was a systematic review of existing studies. A systematic review was selected to ensure rigorous study of existing literature and reduce bias by establishing evidence-based practice (Lichtenstein, Yetley, & Lau, 2008; Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). A two-step analysis was conducted to refine the results based on inclusion criteria: Islam, motivation, work motivation and variants of these terms. The first step consisted of general motivation terms to identify initial studies ( $n=154$ ). The search was limited to English articles sourced in peer-reviewed journals and books indexed in academic databases. To narrow the search in the second step, logical operators containing Islamic terms and motivation terminology were used as criteria: Islamic motivation, Islamic management, Islamic behaviour, and variants of these terms. The results in the second step yielded 28 studies ranging from 1985 to 2015, of which eleven proposed either a model or modification to an existing model. A content analysis on these eleven studies was conducted using three analytical criteria: (1) relation to an Islamic worldview, (2) integration of Western theories, and (3) application of the intrinsic nature of the *nafs* (self). The results of this tier-one will identify models of Islamic work motivation in Western academic journals.

Tier-two implemented an interpretive analysis of Islamic textual doctrine (Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*). The tier-two analysis identified numerous Islamic concepts and alternative relationships determined through interpretation of classical Sunni orthodox literature. Classical Islamic scholars hold a lofty status in Islamic literature, yet their works have not been strongly integrated into Western scholarship. Their importance in studying Islamic concepts cannot be understated. The classical Islamic scholars selected were: al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Khuzaymah (d. 311/924), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751/1350), Ibn al-Manzūr (d. 711/1311, and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406). They were selected due to their status in Islamic scholarship, comprehensive nature of their compendiums, and scope of authorship. Tier-one data will be synthesised into a model based on the tier-two comparison of criteria determined by the interpretive analysis of Islamic literature. Tier-two results will



identify Islamic motivation from the perspective of classical Islamic literature. A synthesis is developed by re-evaluating the relationships between Islamic motivators, motivated behaviour, and a rewards/punishment system and then integrating the interaction with the *nafs*. The model combines key elements of existing models within an Islamic understanding of their interactions and relationships. For this study, intended meanings for Islamic terms that may hold different definitions in Islamic jurisprudence are identified in parenthesis. This study is limited to Islamic work environments; further research is required for non-Islamic work settings.

### **Models of Islamic motivation**

Existing research has taken four distinct directions: (a) analysis of levels of existence (*nafs*) through needs theory (Ali, 2009; Nusair, 1985); (b) studies on Islamic motivation through integration with existing Western models (Alias & Samsudin, 2005; Saefullah, 2012); (c) Islamic motivation specifically through the expectancy model (Abdel-Kawi & Kole, 1991; Khan & Sheikh, 2012); and (d) basic motivator of belief (*īmān*) and a moderator (patience, piety, repentance, or arousal) (Alawneh, 1998; Ather et al., 2011; Ghauri, 2011; Zaman et al., 2013). Of the eleven studies, five propose Islamic models that are not integrated or derived from Western models (direction four). Two of the eleven studies isolate the discussion of the *nafs* (direction one). The models are discussed based on their directions and synthesised with a textual analysis of Islamic literature thereafter.

#### *Direction one: The nafs*

The earliest study of Islamic motivation in Western scholarship is Nusair's (1985) conceptualisation of existence in Islam. He argued that a hierarchy of needs does not exist. According to Nusair, it is the hierarchy of the human psyche that directs needs. He asserted that there are three stages of the self. *Al-nafs al-ammārah* is the self's injunction towards evil. Nusair cited the narrative of Joseph and the woman who tried to seduce him and deferred blame to the incitement of the self towards evil (Qur'ān, 12:53). At this stage, the individual may act contrary to self-interest due to overwhelming desire. *Al-nafs al-lawwāmah* (self-reproach) is a consciousness of right and wrong. Citing chapter 75 of the Qur'ān, Ali (2009) explained that this is a stage where an individual decides the course of action based on knowledge of the consequences

of good and evil. Self-reproach is where *tawbah* (repentance) is crucial to the enhancement of the *nafs*. It allows an individual to take corrective action or digress. *Al-nafs al-muṭma'innah* is a state of serenity and satisfaction. He argued that this level is the epitome of existence. An individual acts based on spiritual fulfilment, resulting in satisfaction through commitment to Allah. This notion of existence in Islam is not novel to Nusair's study. It has been discussed over six hundred years prior by the classical scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah (1995). Nusair proposed a relationship to three needs: (1) physiological, (2) spiritual, and (3) mental. He argued that these needs correspond to the aforementioned levels of existence. In contrast to Western models of motivation, Nusair contended that spiritual needs are emphasised in Islamic motivation.

Ali's study on the internalisation of spiritual needs adds insight into Islamic existence and managerial implications. His study investigates meeting individual needs through a discussion of existence. He adds another level to Nusair's levels of Islamic existence. The first level he deduced is an individual's passion for temptations, or *sawwala*. He cited two references in the Qur'ān: the narrative of Moses and the builder of the calf (Qur'ān, 20:96), and the narrative of Joseph and his brothers (Qur'ān, 12:18). Ali explained *sawwala* as an incitement from the self towards acting upon temptations, thereby inhibiting an individual from optimal outcomes. In other words, it is the nature of a person to act according to his self-interest. Citing the Qur'ān (89:27), Ali argued that an individual in the state of *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah* is purely intrinsically motivated to perform based on what is spiritually conducive to the self and avoid acts that can restrain the self to one of the former levels.

Ali's addition of *sawwala* below *al-nafs al-ammārah* is unique to his model. However, *sawwala* is not a condition of the *nafs* in Islamic literature; rather it is an innate action of the *nafs*. Thirteenth century lexicographer, Ibn al-Manzūr (1883), explained that the verb *sawwala* refers to a beautification of an action by the self, an individual, or the devil. Classical scholars noted that *sawwala* is an action of the *nafs* as a result of being inclined to evil (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). Therefore, it is linguistically and theologically incorrect to classify *sawwala* as a level of the *nafs* as opposed to it being an action of the self in any of its states. In addition to this, Ali's level of existence model and Nusair's Islamic model of human nature does not factor in numerous theological variables that are the cornerstone of motivation from an

Islamic perspective, such as *īmān*. Hussain (2013) discussed several states to Ali's and Nusair's models. However, he ultimately conducted his study on its application in an Indian context using their models. He concluded that the application of this Islamic model of existence is also applicable to a non-Muslim context. Both Ali and Nusair isolated the discussion of Islamic motivation to the self. However, an interpretive analysis on Islamic texts reveals that there are numerous constructs and relationships that influence Islamic motivation that they did not consider (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995).

*Direction two: Integration with Western theories*

Alias and Samsudin (2005) developed a model that integrated the self with Western theories of motivation, specifically: instinct theory, drive-reduction theory, arousal theory, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Their model focused on the function of the self and integration of Western theories. This applies Locke and Latham's (2004) recommendation to synthesise motivation theories using meta-analysis. Alias and Samsudin argued that the attempts of researchers in the past 30 years should not have neglected all the Western theories from development of an Islamic model. They contended that although there are theological differences regarding the self, there are still supporting notions from Western theories of motivation in Islam. Alias and Samsudin approached this issue through explanation of the behaviour of the *Ṣaḥābah* (Prophet's companions). They explained their model through the application of *jihād* (struggle) during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. However, they still used Western theories to explain the concept of motivation within Islam using references to *sīrah* (Prophet's biography). In this model, the self moderates each theory in a hierarchical linear progression model with religious motivation as the epitome. Essentially, this model only applies Western theories to an Islamic perspective. The interpretive analysis of Islamic texts does not align with this integration since the model isolates the self without integrating key Islamic concepts, such as *īmān*.

Saefullah (2012) argued that work motivation in Islam is driven by the principle of seeking *ḥalāl* sustenance. As this principle is an obligation in Islam, this activity is considered an aspect of worship and thereby obedience to Allah. While Saefullah also utilised Western theories of motivation in his discussion, unlike Alias and Samsudin, he

included the necessity of maintaining sincere intention for performing any action. He stated that the realisation of an action can only be warranted through sincerity and good intentions. Saefullah suggested a model of motivation built on Maslow's hierarchy, expectancy theory, and Edward's model of intrinsic needs, organisational justice, and the equity model. However, these theories have to filter through sincere and good intentions. Kamarulzaman (2012) corroborated this idea and considered Alias and Samsudin's model more robust.

*Direction three: Islamic expectancy theory*

Abdel-Kawi and Kole (1991) developed a model of Islamic motivation based on the expectancy-valence theory. They correlated three situations: expected rewards with antecedent stimuli, reinforcements with mediated cognitive events, and required performance with behavioural goals. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory lacked the concept of needs found in Maslow's hierarchy. Abdel-Kawi and Kole synthesised both theories along with the Islamic theological motive of the "ultimate goal", being the afterlife, to supplement the expectancy model. Their model proposes a third expectancy variable based on intrinsic motivation that functions as a reward from Allah.

Khan and Sheikh (2012) modified the Wagner Hollenbeck theory of motivation, which is based on Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 2010). Their study emphasised the valence variable in Wagner and Hollenbeck's (2010) model of motivation ( $M$ ), where expectancy of performance ( $E$ ) is affected by the instrumentality of motivation ( $I$ ) and valence ( $V$ ). Khan and Sheikh added another layer of valence. Their justification for this modification is the influence of spirituality on the anticipation of satisfaction from the desired outcomes. They explained that while the reward and expectancy is of importance, if these factors had a low value, a high valence would continue to motivate an individual. The Islamic justification, according to Khan and Sheikh, is that seeking divine pleasure or approval for pursuing a "*halāl*" (permissible) action is considered an act of worship. They noted that this additional element of valence influences the desire to perform and the effort exerted. Unlike the previous models, Khan and Sheikh strongly focus on the achievement variable rather than on Islamic principles, such as *īmān*. This model bears resemblance to Abdel-Kawi and Kole's (1991) expectancy theory.

*Direction four: Īmān model and Islamic motivators*

Alawneh's (1998) study on Islamic motivation is instrumental in laying the foundation of investigation into this topic (Alias & Samsudin, 2005). Alawneh argued that numerous verses in the Qur'ān establish that motivation is integral to the human condition and is guided through belief in Islam. He concluded that Islam asserts the need for individuals to follow the system of Islam to stimulate the drive to undertake action. Alawneh discussed the elements of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in Islamic scripture. He noted that motivating factors can be classified into: (1) instincts, (2) incentives, (3) drives, (4) needs, and (5) motives. Alawneh argued that the interrelatedness between these values is classified in the Qur'ān as reward and punishment. Alawneh identified the drives as *targhīb* (encouragement) and *tarhīb* (admonishment). For instance, whenever the discussion on heaven and hell occur, there is often mention of instinctual factors, such as hunger and thirst. Alawneh concluded that the spiritual need is based on a purpose, which is being a representative of Allah on Earth (Qur'ān, 2:30). However, traditional Islamic scholars determined that mankind's purpose is to worship Allah alone. This concept of *tawhīd* is the sole purpose of existence according to early Islamic scholars dating as far back as the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. (Ibn Khuzaymah, 1994). Citing the Qur'ān (51:56), the 8<sup>th</sup> century scholar, al-Ṭabarī (2001), stated that the purpose of creation is to turn to the worship of Allah and rejecting the worship of any other deities. While this concept is commonly found in classical Islamic literature, few modern researchers specified *tawhīd* as an individual factor in motivation. For instance, Baqutayan (2012) centred her model on *tawhīd* (Qur'ān, 21:25) as a separate entity from *īmān*. Kamarulzaman (2012) agreed with this notion and added it to Alawneh's (1998) assertion of *īmān* to motivation. Baqutayan postulated that this innate nature, *fiṭrah*, is affected by environmental factors that change the *nafs*.

Alawneh's argument is based on the ability to learn and act on newly acquired knowledge. Thereby, an individual's actions are determined by their belief system that is fuelled by knowledge. According to Alawneh, this notion is considered cognitive motivation. However, the fundamental variable in Islamic motivation is *īmān* (Alias & Samsudin, 2005). Alawneh defined *īmān* as "a profound psychological belief that goes beyond doubt and that permeates the self overtly as well as covertly" (p. 29). Contrary to existing literature, traditional Islamic

scholars like Ibn Abi Hātim al-Rāzī argued that *īmān* is the statement of belief and action of the tongue, heart, and limbs while adding the clause: “It increases with good deeds and decreases with evil actions” (al-Madkhalī, n.d.). *Īmān* is based on the correctness of one’s belief. Surprisingly, in Alawneh’s model, the *īmān* concept precedes purpose of creation, *tawhīd*. Based on Islamic texts, motivation should begin with the purpose of creation, the Islamic concept of *tawhīd*, as the variable preceding *īmān*. Alawneh adds *taqwā* (piety), *tawbah* (repentance), and *tahrīd* (arousal) as moderators. He notes that the Qur’ān mentions *taqwā* 258 times, *tawbah* 93 times, and *tahrīd* 2 times. Finally, Alawneh introduces a theory of motivation through *taqwā* as a moderator variable between motivators and outcomes. This model of motivation based on *taqwā* (piety) is fuelled by the reinforcement and deterrent concept in the Qur’ān. Rewards and punishments occur in this life and the next. Alawneh argued that these models are interrelated and fuelled by the level of knowledge of an individual. Ghauri (2011) asserted that motivation in Islam must be driven by a strong belief in Allah. Neither Alawneh nor Ghauri specify the type of knowledge and the type of effect it has on motivation. A synthesised model must identify the relationship of knowledge with these variables.

Ather et al. (2011) developed a model on Islamic motivation that is based on two distinct categories: (1) spiritual and (2) materialistic motivation. Similar to Alawneh’s model of Islamic motivation, Ather et al.’s spiritual motivation begins with *īmān*. Their model excludes the *taqwā* model of Alawneh and postulates the reinforcement and deterrent model found in the Qur’ān. The materialistic motivation encapsulates an individual’s motivation solely related to the *dunyā* (worldly life) and does not relate to the afterlife. Ather et al.’s total motivation model restricts material motivation to *halāl* (permissible) gains. The driving force of Ather et al.’s model is *īmān* as the centre of spiritual motivation. They discuss materialistic motivation in the perspective of Western needs-based theory. Ather et al.’s model insinuates a dichotomy perspective between material and spiritual motivation.

Ather et al. collected data from 147 respondents across 25 organisations. By using 13 statements on a seven-point Likert scale, they determined what factors from this model strongly influence the Muslim participants’ motivation. Ismail, Anwar, and Hamsan (2011) concluded that the ultimate reward motivation for a Muslim, ideally,

should be to attain the pleasure of Allah. Their conclusion conforms to classical theological works in Islamic scholarship (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). Ather et al. concluded that motivation in Islam differs from traditional motivation studies. Ghauri argued that there are two major factors that drive Islamic motivation, well-grounded belief in Allah that is reinforced by *īmān* and *ṣabr* (patience) (Qur'ān, 3:146), and rewards from Allah reinforced by promises of reward in the afterlife and association with Allah, or seeking the pleasure of Allah (Ghauri, 2011).

Zaman et al. (2013) surmised that intrinsic motivation is influenced by Islamic work ethic. They followed a model whereby Islamic work ethic remains an independent variable that can influence job satisfaction directly and have a varying effect on intrinsic motivation as a mediating variable. They tested this model on a sample of 80 male and female participants of varying educational and professional backgrounds aged 20 to 40. They found that an Islamic work ethic had a significant impact on intrinsic motivation. The results of this study corroborated similar studies, such as Hayati and Caniogo's (2012) observation on 149 Islamic banking employees. They found that the relationship between the Islamic work ethic and intrinsic motivation is significant, resulting in improved motivation when participants had a higher regard for Islamic values and ethics. Hayati and Caniogo (2012) included two additional constructs, namely organisational commitment and job performance. Ali and Al-Owaihian (2008) surmised that Islamic work ethic is a fundamental driver of motivation in Islamic motivation. They implied that Muslim managers held the Islamic work ethic in a high regard. They concluded that managers of Muslim employees must focus management on the development of a process that is conducive to Islamic motivation. They felt that this can be done through understanding the Islamic work ethic as explained in Islamic literature.

Ahmad (2009) reinforced the notion that *'ibādāt* (worship) is central to Islamic motivation. He differentiated between *'ibādāt* and *Mu'āmalāt* (interactions) with the former being a religious obligation as a motivator. Numerous Qur'ānic injunctions justify this assertion (Qur'ān, 24:37; 51:56; 25:57-68). Similar to Ather et al. and Alawneh, Ahmad focused spiritual motivation on *īmān*, *taqwā*, and *'ibādāt*. In order for an individual to be motivated in this model, his work must be considered a virtuous action and have meaning for their *dunyā* (worldly life). However, this argument also lacked the fundamental concept of

*tawhīd*, which precedes *īmān* and *taqwā*. Ahmad (2009) contrasted Islamic motivation to Western theories and concluded that three factors in Western theories coincide with Islamic motivation: (1) instincts and biological determinants, (2) incentives, and (3) commitment (sincerity).

### **A synthesised Islamic model of motivation**

The preceding analysis aimed to identify the approach of existing literature to Islamic motivation. Adopting an interpretive perspective, this study synthesises Islamic elements in previous studies, specifically *īmān* and the levels of existence. The model applies an integrative approach to identify and explain the relationships between motivator variables, outcome of actions, expectancy, and the condition of the self (*nafs*). This is achieved through the behavioural characteristics from an Islamic perspective. Although this analysis aligns closest to the fourth direction, it reconstructs the relationships between variables based on an interpretive study of Islamic literature as well as re-evaluating the approach to the *nafs*. This model determined two dependent variables: (1) outcome of actions (motivated behaviour), and (2) rewards/punishment system. The outcome of actions is based on the *ḥadīth* judging actions based on their final result (al-Bukhārī, 81: 6493). The *nafs* is an independent variable that interacts with motivated behaviour. Islam emphasises the difference between nature of actions and their outcomes. The outcome of actions, as a variable, is the final judgment of its correctness and acceptability to Allah (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). This section starts with a discussion of the *nafs*. The second step discusses how Islamic motivators affect motivated behaviour (outcome of actions). Subsequently, the system of rewards/punishments is integrated into the model.

#### *The nafs and the outcome of actions (motivated behaviour)*

In analysing existing models of Islamic motivation, the importance of the *nafs* is evident (Ali, 2009; Nusair, 1985), and is the first critical step in the development of an Islamic motivation model. Ali (2009) and Nusair (1985) discussed the levels of *nafs* in terms of needs analysis that adds spiritual needs. This proposed model suggests an alternative perspective of the *nafs* in addition to integration with motivated behaviours. Classical scholars postulated that the *nafs* is singular and has three conditions. Ibn al-Qayyim (2010) determined these states as: (1) *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah* (Qur'ān, 89:27–28), (2) *al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū'* (Qur'ān, 12:53), and (3) *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* (Qur'ān, 75:2).



However, there is an interaction between behaviour and the *nafs* that has not previously been integrated with models related to motivators in Islam. Ibn al-Qayyim explained that the default condition of the *nafs* is *al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū'*. This is because mankind is created fundamentally ignorant and oppressive while knowledge and justice is a learned trait that affects the state of the *nafs* (Qur'ān, 4:28). As for *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*, the early Islamic scholars differed in two opinions: (1) the *nafs* that is repeatedly changing, and (2) self-reproaching. However, he stated that the second definition is the most theologically correct. The *nafs* can dynamically change within the same day based on the outcomes of an individual's actions. In ranking these states, he asserted that *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah* is the desired praiseworthy state of a Muslim while *al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū'* is a reprehensible state. The condition of *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* can be praiseworthy or reprehensible depending on the outcome of an individual's actions. In contrast to existing literature, this model suggests that *al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū'* has a habitual proactive relationship with an individual's behavioural characteristics, whereas *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* and *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah* are results of behavioural characteristics. In other words, a self that is *al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū'* is actively pursuing a behavioural state of oppressiveness. The remaining attributes of the *nafs* are affected by behavioural characteristics influenced by outcomes of actions through the nature of *tawhīd* and *īmān*. Ibn al-Qayyim expounded on the types of individuals in relation to their *nafs* (as in Figure 1). He stated that either a person is in control of the self or a person is overtaken by the condition of the self. If overtaken, a person can either be destroyed or be able to overpower his condition. This view is supported in the Qur'ān: "But for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the self from unlawful inclination, then indeed Heaven will be his refuge" (Qur'ān, 79: 37–41).

It is imperative to address how an individual changes the attributes of his *nafs*. Ibn al-Qayyim cited a *ḥadīth*: "The intellectual person accounts his *nafs* and acts according to what comes after death. The decrepit one follows the desires of his *nafs* and hopes for other than Allah." Therefore, the factors that influence the *nafs* can be understood based on motivated behaviours of a Muslim. Due to this, it is imperative to shift the discussion of the *nafs* from needs theory towards analysis of motivated behaviours and rewards/punishments. The 13<sup>th</sup> century

Islamic scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah, classified an individual's behaviour into three characteristics based on the Qur'ān (35:32): (1) *zālim li-nafsih* (the one who oppresses his *nafs*), (2) *muqtaṣid* (the one who approaches good actions in moderation), and (3) *sābiq bi-al-khayrāt* (the one who strives towards good deeds). He argued that the other verses on this behavioural categorisation are general and not specific to Muslims (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). While being dependent on the outcome of actions, motivated behaviours influence the relationship between the levels of existence (*nafs*) in Islam (see Figure 1). This discussion provides novel insight into the Islamic perspective of motivation that has not been previously discussed in Western publications.

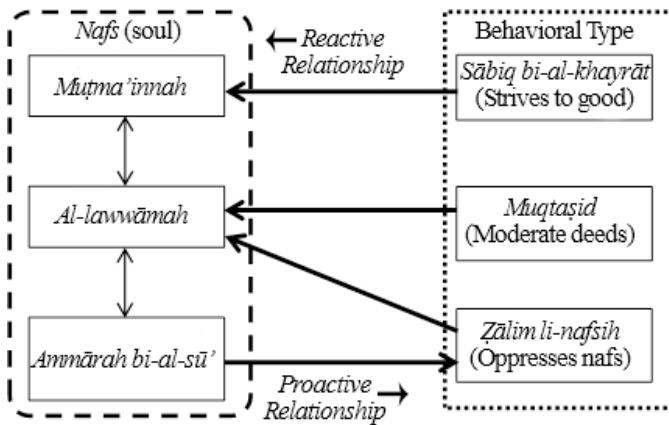


Figure 1: Enhanced model of existence.

### Islamic motivators

The second step in synthesising the model is to incorporate the variables that drive motivated behaviour and rewards/punishments. The *īmān* models (Alawneh, 1998; Ather et al., 2011) must be integrated with the *tawhīd* model (Baqutayan, 2012; Ghauri, 2011; Kamarulzaman, 2012). While the *īmān* models may incorporate *tawhīd*, a person cannot partially actualise *tawhīd*, whereas *īmān* can exist in varying levels. The Prophet Muhammad stated: “*Īmān* is sixty odd branches, the highest is testifying that nothing is worthy of worship except Allah; and the lowest is to remove harmful objects from the street (al-Bukhārī, 2:9).”

Therefore, it can be understood that *tawhīd* fundamentally precedes *īmān*. Al-Fārūqī (1992) explained that *tawhīd* is the force behind *īmān*. *Tawhīd* and *īmān* are two independent variables in

the motivation paradigm that share an interdependent relationship. However, several constructs develop the relationship between *tawhīd* and *īmān*. *Ikhlās* (sincerity) and *mutāba‘ah* (adherence to prophetic guidance) are variables influenced by *tawhīd* and mediate between *tawhīd* and *īmān*. One *ḥadīth* famously states: “actions are (judged) by intentions” (al-Bukhārī, 1:1). The purpose of actions should be to please Allah. Performing actions without *ikhhlās* is a *nifāq* (hypocrisy) (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). The relationship between these variables is moderated by knowledge of *uṣūl* (foundational knowledge of Islamic theology), and *furū‘* (knowledge of legislative rulings). The knowledge of *uṣūl* moderates the relationship between *tawhīd* and *ikhhlās* (Qur‘ān, 47:19). Knowledge of Islam affects the condition of the self by moderating the relationship between purpose and sincerity (Ibn al-Qayyim, 2010). Islamic scholars, such as Ibn Abī Khuthaymah (2001) and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (1994), emphasised the importance of Islamic knowledge and its effect on *īmān*. The Qur‘ān (58:11) notes this effect: “Allah raises those among you who believe and those who have been given knowledge in levels”.

Actions related to worship must be in accordance to the Sunnah (prophetic tradition). An action performed without *mutāba‘ah* is a *bid‘ah* (reprehensible innovation), even if it has *ikhhlās* (al-Bukhārī, 53:2697). Ibn Taymiyyah explained that a *mubtadi‘* is one who performs actions without adherence to Sunnah. Knowledge of *furū‘* moderates the relationship between *tawhīd* and *mutāba‘ah*. In addition, knowledge of the intended action, or work, moderates the relationship between *mutāba‘ah* and the action component. Previous models do not consider these functional relationships between *tawhīd* and *īmān*. An integrated Islamic model requires this analysis as supported in the Qur‘ān (19:12; 20:114; 39:9; 35:28). Prophet Muhammad likened the pleasure of Allah (intrinsic reward) with these concepts (al-Bukhārī, 81:6478).

While discussing *īmān* as an independent variable in Islamic motivation, previous studies have not discussed components of *īmān* in their models of Islamic motivation and the relationships that influence them. As an important element, Islamic theology categorises *īmān* in two sections: (1) speech and actions of the heart (*aqwāl wa-a‘māl al-qalb*) and (2) actions of the tongue and limbs (*a‘māl al-lisān wa-al-jawāriḥ*). It is imperative to include the discussion of performing good actions and acting on knowledge (Baqutayan,

2012). In this part of the synthesised model, *īmān* consists of these two components, which are professions of faith with firm belief and actions (as in Figure 2).

Alawneh argued that *targhīb* and *tarhīb* moderate the system of action and rewards. He described them as an internal need system moderated by external stimuli (rewards/punishment). This synthesised model suggests an alternative understanding of these relationships. *targhīb* is considered an extrinsic moderator of actions based on the encouragement of an individual to perform righteous actions thereby affecting the outcome that leads to reward (Qur'ān, 57:20) rather than the reward itself. Similarly, *Tarhīb* is a discouragement by threat of punishment to affect actions. This model argues that these constructs moderate the system of actions and their outcomes extrinsically rather than actions and rewards intrinsically (Qur'ān, 85:12, 14).

Three intrinsic variables moderate the relationship between *īmān* and the outcome of actions. Baqutayan (2012) considered patience an important variable in performing behavioural actions that affect the type of reward. Ibn al-Qayyim discussed the importance of patience in the Qur'ān and cited over 90 verses in reference to patience. Within the context of action in Islam, patience and perseverance is oft-repeated by classical scholars (Turfe, 1996). Patience is often referenced in the Qur'ān alongside action and belief and is an intrinsic attribute that enhances the outcome of actions leading to rewards. In addition to this variable, *taqwā* (piety) and *tawakkul* (reliance on Allah) supports motivation and affects the strength, or type, of reward in a synthesised model (Qur'ān, 65:2–3). *Taqwā* and *tawakkul* play a strong role in Islamic behaviour (Ibn al-Qayyim, 2010). Ibn Taymiyyah argued that when these two variables increase, the condition of the self turns towards perfection as one relies strongly on Allah by entrusting him to facilitate the outcome of his actions (see Figure 2).

#### *Rewards/punishment system*

The Qur'ān supports the extrinsic motivation system of rewards and punishment by promising rewards for good action and punishment for oppressive actions. This achievement expectancy system is discussed in literature by several researchers (Abdel-Kawi & Kole,

1991; Ather et al., 2011; Khan & Sheikh, 2012). An individual who performs good actions will experience a positive change in the *nafs*, whereas one who sins harms the *nafs* (Qur’ān 41:46). Additionally, the individual is rewarded or punished in the afterlife based on actions in this life (Qur’ān 16:97). Finally, the system of reward and punishment can take effect simultaneously for the same outcome. However, the reward and punishment of the afterlife is deferred until death. Drawing from existing literature, this relationship of extrinsic motivators is a common theme in Islamic motivation. Ibn Taymiyyah stated that a Muslim’s actions are affected by a combination of intrinsic motivators (love of Allah) and a system of desiring his reward and fearing his punishment (see Figure 2). This system is evidenced in the verse: “They hope for His mercy and fear His punishment. Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is ever feared” (Qur’ān 17:57). It can be understood, based on this verse, that extrinsic promises of reward and punishment are essential concepts in Islamic motivation.

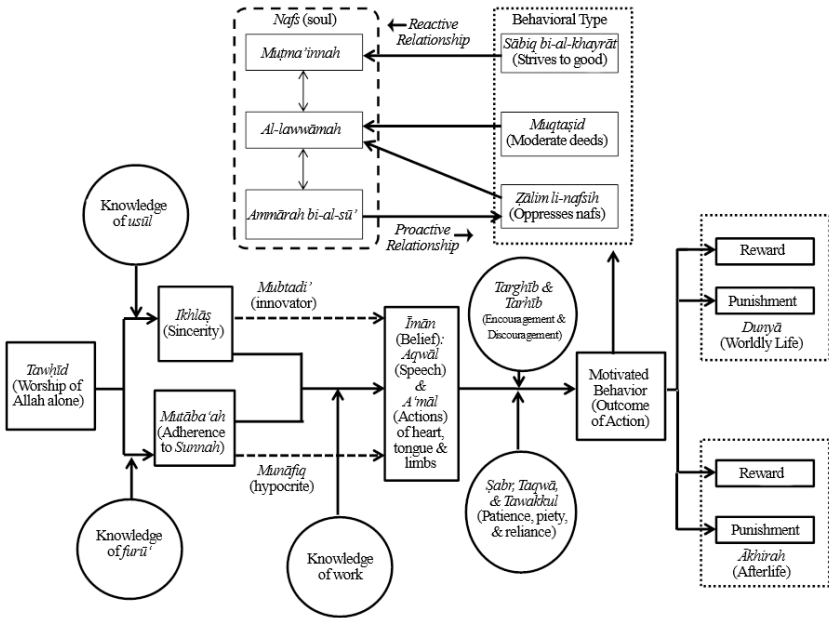


Figure 2. Synthesised model of Islamic motivation

## Implications on motivation management

Islamic work motivation is a complex topic that applies numerous theological and behavioural factors. The role of managing motivation is emphasised in a *ḥadīth* categorising individuals as either a key to the door of good actions or a key to the door of evil actions with positive and negative reinforcement (Ibn Mājah, 1:237). The optimal motivation resulting from the relationships of these constructs places a Muslim at the highest level of the *nafs* (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*) due to their behaviour being *sābiq bi-al-khayrāt* (Qur'ān, 27:59; 13:28; 2:121; 9:100). Through integration, this motivational model can assist researchers in refining the understanding of Islamic work motivation and aid practitioners in managing motivation. The model addresses a connection of the *nafs* and motivated behaviour through the Islamic worldview. By unifying insights from existing models, this synthesis provides a holistic outlook of motivated behaviour and the *nafs*.

There are a variety of approaches that can be implemented in this model to measure Islamic motivation. Ideally, traditional measurements of motivators could be applied to this model. From a broader perspective, empirical tests should be used to test this model in management environments. Implementation of this model has numerous theoretical and practical considerations. Providing a novel approach to Islamic motivation is crucial to management development in a Muslim context. Formulating the conceptualisation through the purpose of existence (*tawḥīd*) explains the interaction of belief (*īmān*) and the self (*nafs*). It is also critical to factor the variables that directly influence *īmān*. The moderating effects of knowledge, piety, patience, reliance, encouragement, and discouragement are difficult constructs to measure. However, they play a defining role in Islamic motivation. This specifically suggests that organisations and researchers should holistically approach motivation through Islamic perspectives. It challenges existing notions by reevaluating relationships and how we perceive the interaction of the *nafs* with motivated behaviour.

Finally, this research contributes to the discussion of Islamic work motivation by proposing a synthesised model based on significant theological concepts. In terms of managerial implications, the study suggests the importance of spirituality in developing meaningful

work for the motivation of a Muslim workforce. It is imperative to note that optimal Islamic motivation may fluctuate in various work settings. Future research could empirically investigate Islamic motivation in non-Islamic work environments. To promote motivation, organisations should consider the process of motivation in Islam. This requires addressing work motivation at a deeper level. Considering that Islam views spirituality as a way of life, the context of this model is applicable to the development of job characteristics suitable for religious Muslims. In addition, the appropriate application of *targhīb* and *tarhīb* can improve outcomes and allow employees to realise their potential. There are prospects for future research in analysing the effects of sub-cultures and sectarian differences of Muslim societies. This model can provide a unified insight to foster dialog on Islamic motivation.

## Conclusion

Islamic motivation revolves around the concept of the *nafs* (self) and its states. Several studies have discussed the self and existence in Islam, yet there has not been a synthesised model of Islamic motivation that ranges from the spectrum of existence to theological injunctions based on the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions. Some researchers analysed variables either using existing Western models, like the expectancy theory, or have focused on the belief structure of Islam. Due to the intimate nature of beliefs and behaviour, a holistic investigation into Islamic motivation is necessary. This allows us to conclude that Islamic motivation begins with the understanding of existence and the purpose of mankind's creation. This lays the fundamental framework of Islamic motivation. Sincere actions that are driven by Prophetic guidance, Islamic law, and work ethic influence the state of the *nafs*. An individual is also motivated by the extrinsic reward mechanism that contains a divine promise of recompense in the afterlife. This extrinsic motivation, however, also extends to the materialistic world within the framework of good deeds. Variables, such as righteous intentions, patience, reliance on Allah, piety, encouragement, and admonishment regulate the fluctuation of motivation. The ultimate goal of Islamic motivation is to guide the *nafs* to the state of tranquillity where the individual, driven by implementation of *tawhīd* and *īmān*, strives for good and seeks the pleasure of Allah in order to receive reward in this life and the afterlife.

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