

THREE KINDS OF MUSLIM MANAGERS: LESSONS FROM THE QUR'AN

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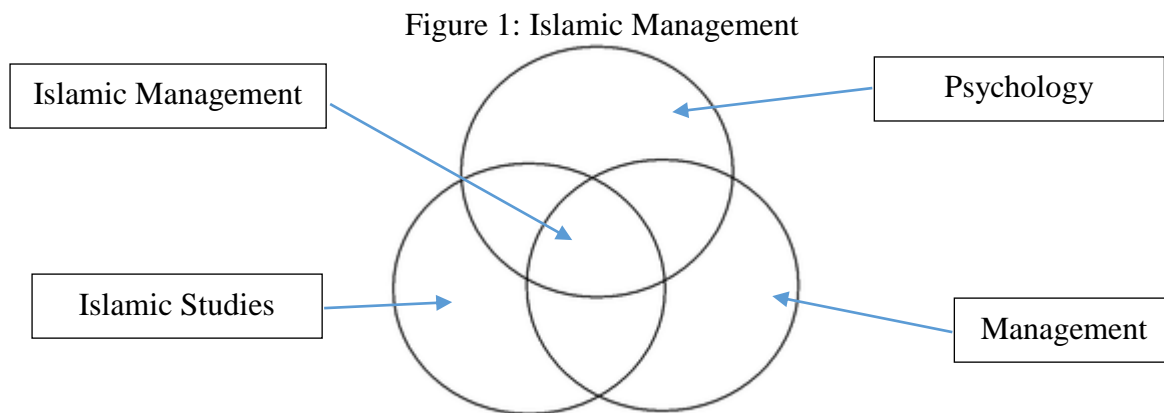
ABSTRACT

This study concerns Islamic management. Scholars agree that *Surah al-Fatihah* provides a summary of the entire Qur'an. In particular, *Surah al-Fatihah* identifies three kinds of people: people who have knowledge and apply it, people who have knowledge but do not apply it, and people who have no knowledge. However, other *surahs* provide further insights. *Surah al-Asr*, in particular, emphasizes the importance of enjoining "*haqq*" and enjoining "*sabr*". These concepts are difficult to translate into English so a separate discussion is necessary to clearly identify these concepts. These concepts enable the author to conclude that the Qur'an provides a typology that divides Muslim managers into three separate categories.

Keywords: *Muslim managers; Surah l-Fatihah; Islamic Management.*

INTRODUCTION

This study is related to Islamic management. Islamic management is an academic field that is at the intersection of management, psychology and management (see figure 1).



Scholars of Islamic management have a dual role. They bring ideas of management and psychology and question scholars of Islamic studies. They then bring ideas from Islamic studies and question scholars of management and psychology. In this study, some concepts of the discipline of *tafsir* of *al-Qur'an* (explanation of the Qur'an) will be used to develop a typology of Muslim managers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology chosen is a literature review. The main reference will be Amin Ahsan Islahi's *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* translated into English by Mohammed Saleem Kayani. Throughout this study, this will be referred to as Islahi (2016). Supporting texts will be referred to add some further insights.

The Premise

The Qur'an often uses typologies to help readers think. In *Surah al-Fatihah*, three groups of people are described (people that are blessed, people that earn anger, and people who are lost). An analysis would be:

- a) People who are blessed are good Muslims
- b) People who earn anger are bad Muslims
- c) People who are lost include ignorant Muslims

This automatically creates three kinds of managers. A further analysis shows that the minimum standard for entering Paradise is found in *Surah al-Asr* (Khan, 1993). This would lead to the following conclusions:

- a) People who are blessed are good Muslims. They uphold the minimum standard set out in *Surah al-Asr*
- b) People who earn anger are bad Muslims. They break the minimum standard related to actions set out in *Surah al-Asr*.
- c) People who are lost are ignorant Muslims. They break the minimum standard related to faith set out in *Surah al-Asr*.

In this study, the argument will be made that there are three kinds of Muslim managers that reflect the three kinds of individuals highlighted in *Surah al-Fatihah*. It is understood that every manager needs to be ethical and competent. Even if they are ethical, an incompetent

manager will be a problem for the organization (Fontaine, Ahmad & Oziev, 2017). To simplify the discussion, it is assumed that the managers discussed in this study are all competent. The main focus will thus be the ethical standard of Muslim managers.

Surah al-Fatihah

The English translation of *surah al-Fatihah* is,

*In the name of Ar-Rahman, Ar-Rahim
All thanks and praise is due to Allah, the Master of all creations
Ar-Rahman, Ar-Rahim,
The king of the day of recompense
You alone do we worship and you alone do we call upon for help
Guide us the straight way¹*

The way of those you have blessed, not the way of those who earn anger, nor those who have gone astray

Table 1 briefly explains the logic of this *surah*.

Table 1: A Summary of *al-Fatihah*

Know Allah	Allah is worthy of praise. One must internalise is a sense of deep, profound gratitude. He is your Master (<i>rabb</i>). He has always been taking care of you in a loving manner. If He is your master, then you are His slave (<i>'abd</i>). This must also be internalised. Allah is incredibly loving and caring towards His creation. Nonetheless, his love and care cannot be taken for granted. Everything will be judged on the Day of Recompense
A Contract with Allah	We will worship you alone. Worship means obeying Allah 24/7 based on His Revelation. When we seek help, we know that everything goes back to Allah. This is a statement of extreme submissiveness and humility.
Three types of people	People who are blessed: they know revelation and apply it. Those who receive anger: they know revelation but ignore it. Those who are lost: they don't know revelation.

Islahi (2016, 69-87) explanation is more detailed. With regards to *rabb*, the Arabs used to believe in Allah but they also “*believed in other lords whom they regarded as partners with Allah in managing the affairs of the universe*” (Islahi, 2016, p. 70). Although these beliefs may seem strange today, nonetheless, many management writers and practitioners claim to believe in God but give themselves the right to manage their own organizations without referring to Islamic law. The Qur’an is clear. One cannot pick and choose which *ayah* to believe in and which *ayah* to ignore. A businessman cannot choose to believe in *Ar-Rahman*, *Ar-Rahim* and ignore the fact that he has a *rabb*, that he is a slave, or that there is a Day of Recompense. This realization leads to the statement of extreme submissiveness and humility (Islahi, 2016, p. 72). An arrogant person can say these words but they do not reflect the attitude of submission that is required. Islahi (2016, p. 73) notes that the statement “*you alone we call upon for help*” is general and relate to all human affairs. The view that Muslims must obey Allah inside the mosque and that they are free to disobey him outside the mosque contradicts this statement.

¹ The *ayah* does not say, “*Guide us to the straight way*” but “*guide us the straight way*”. The preposition “*ila*” (to) is omitted in the Qur’an (Islahi, 2016, p. 74)

The next statement “*guide us the straight away*” indicates the necessity for prophets. Islahi (2016) explanation is quite brief but Khan and Randhawa (2016) offer more insights. Throughout the Qur’an, guidance and misguidance “*employs a rich imagery of a desert journey*” (Khan & Randhawa, 2016, p.248). Walid Saleh, Khan and Randhawa (2016) argue that the imagery of a journey is fundamental to understanding the Qur’an. The Prophet² said, “*Be in this world as if you are a stranger or a traveler along a path. Count yourself among the inhabitants of the grave*” (Ahmad). Commenting on this narration, one scholar wrote that many people have their hearts filled with the love of this world to the point that they become slaves to it and its people. Many people have sold their religion, their religion, their conscience, and people due to it (Zarabozo, 1999, p. 1530).

The last *ayah* is *The way of those you have blessed, not the way of those who earn anger, nor those who have gone astray*” refers to the three kinds of people that have been mentioned earlier. Khan and Randhawa (2016, p. 250) notes that those who earn anger have knowledge of revelation but their actions contradict their knowledge. Those who are lost are confused with regards to their beliefs. Khan and Randhawa (2016, p. 250) point the obvious when they explain that a Muslim may fall into the last two categories of *surah al-Fatihah*. To better understand these three categories, it is useful to go to *surah al-Asr*.

Surah al-Asr

Scholars agree that *Surah al-Asr* is a good summary of the Qur’anic perspective (Khan, 1993). Khan (1993) translates it as,

1. *By Time*
2. *Verily, mankind is in a state of loss*
3. *Except those who have faith, and do righteous deeds, and join together in the mutual teaching of truth and of patience and constancy*

He starts by stressing the importance of this *surah*. Many scholars have commented on this *surah*. Imam al-Shafi’i said that a deep and thoughtful study of this *surah* alone provides adequate guidance for salvation (Khan, 1993, p.7). He argued that the *surah* is divided into two parts. The first part (by time, verily mankind is in a loss) is a statement on the general human condition. The second part formulates the “*essential requirements and conditions of a successful life*” (Khan, 1993, p.8).

Before reviewing its lessons, he compares *Surah al-Asr* to *surah at-Teen*. *Surah at-Teen* has a more optimistic tone because it states the primordial goodness of man (95:04). Both *surahs* allude to the two paths that humanity can travel. On one path, the majority of people will follow cultural traditions without really thinking clearly about their purpose of life. On the other path, a minority of people will think deeply about their purpose of life before drawing certain conclusions and acting upon them (Khan, 1993, p.10). Khan (1993) insists that *Surah al-Asr* and *Surah at-Tin* should be studied together, or else individuals might end up with a pessimistic view of the human condition.

The first *ayah* can be interpreted in multiple ways. One way is to think about history, the rise and fall of civilizations, numerous military campaigns, and billions of people living and dying. Thus, time is the “*greatest teacher and mentor of man*” (Khan, 1993, p.12).

² The prayer “peace and blessing be upon him” is implied in the text whenever the Prophet is mentioned.

The second *ayah* epitomizes the tragedy of mankind. This works at multiple levels. At the macro-level, history confirms the human tragedy. At the micro-level, “*the complete preoccupation with the immediate environment and personal problems*” prevents individuals from maturing spiritually (Khan, 1993, p. 11). It should be remembered that the majority of people on this planet still live in abject poverty, with very little food, water, clothing and shelter (Khan, 1993, p. 13). Even wealthy individuals often suffer from anxiety. The Qur’an describes this reality and how everyone will eventually meet Allah on the Day of Judgment. Allah says,

“*O mankind, indeed you are labouring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet it*” (84:06)

The last *ayah* delineates the sole means of survival. The success of human life depends on:

1. *Iman* (faith)
2. *Amal salih* (good deeds)
3. *Tawasi bil-haq* (mutual exhortation to truth)
4. *Tawasi bil-sabr* (mutual exhortation to constancy and steadfastness)

Khan (1993, p. 15) notes that these *ayat* define success in way that is diametrically opposed to the ones prevalent in a materialistic society. These four conditions form the absolute minimum requirements to protect oneself from destruction. If even one of these conditions is missing, the result will be failure.

Khan (1993) then explains these four conditions in some detail. The key point is that there is a logical progression between these concepts. Real faith should lead to good deeds, good deeds must include a concern for the society which naturally leads to *tawasi bil-haq* and this requires patience. Khan (1993, p.18) explains that the link between faith and actions is “*so closely united and intertwined that the latter can be treated as the sine qua non of the former.*” Khan (1993, p. 18) emphasizes that *amal salih* include both the religious and moral teachings of Islam. These include the rights of Allah (like the prayer) and the rights of individuals (like honoring parents).

With regards *tawasi bil-haq*, Khan (1993, p. 21) insists that ‘*al-haq*’ refers to both religious and moral duties. This requires fighting for social justice and establishing communities of believers who reinforce one another (Khan, 1993, p. 23). Khan (1993, p. 26) devotes a paragraph emphasizes the importance of kindness in this process by quoting a narration that translates as,

“*Whoever is devoid of kindness is devoid of all good*”

Khan (1993, p. 27) comments on a general misunderstanding that many Muslims have about Islam. Often, Muslims put too much emphasis on performing religious rituals without considering the duty of *tawasi bil-haq*. This is a misguided attitude. *Tawasi bil-haq* is not optional, it is obligatory. Khan (1993) finishes his short treatise by noting that Muslims must find the right balance between social and religious duties (i.e. forgetting to pray because one is busy in social work is equally problematic). Lastly, every person will be questioned about his or her efforts within his or her capacity.

Qutb (1979), commenting on this *surah*, says that the Muslims were successful when they applied the *surah* in their lives. The Companions did not suddenly reach powerful positions. The Qur'an had "*beaten them into shape*" and their interaction with the Prophet meant that they had been "*purged*" of the striving for greed, power, wealth, and fame (Qutb, 1979, p. 281). The Companions accepted positions of authority with great reluctance. To remind themselves of their responsibility, the Companions would read this *surah* to one another every time they met (Qutb, 197, p. 286). Qutb (1979, p. 274) points out that living by *surah al-Asr* is the only way to be free. Any other forms of freedom are illusory because there is always servitude to man-made ideas.

The Problem

Nonetheless, there is a riddle. A study of the life of the Prophet shows that throughout his stay in Mecca, the Quraish's attacks against him became more and more violent. A simplistic view is to focus on the individual personality of every enemy of Islam. The argument would be, "*they did bad things because they were bad people*". After the Prophet went to Medinah, the intensity of the attacks reached a new level of hatred – first with Badr, then with Uhud and then with Ahzab. This seems to confirm the view that these disbelievers were really "bad people". Yet something very mysterious happened. Despite the increasing hatred towards the Muslims, individuals who hated Islam for years converted to Islam. They then became heroes of Islam. A calculation shows that 99% of Arabs converted to Islam by the end of the Prophet's life (Fontaine & Oziev, 2012). Individual psychology cannot not explain this phenomenon.

The same problem exists in explaining the Qur'an. Since 2016, this author has been studying the Qur'an in order to derive insights for Muslim business leaders. To date, studies have been published on *surah al-Baqarah*, *surah 'Ali Imran* and *surah an-Nisa* (Fontaine, 2017a, Fontaine, 2017b, Fontaine, 2018). Two papers on *surah al-Ma'idah* and *surah al-An'am* are being reviewed. He is currently working on *surah al-A'raf*. Much of the Meccan Qur'an is a criticism of human beings in general. Human beings are described as greedy, impatient, and generally they don't think. This theme runs throughout the entire Meccan Qur'an. At face value, these statements seem strange. Obviously, non-Muslims were thinking but they failed to see the reality of the Prophet's message – despite it being very obvious. That is one obvious explanation. But social psychology can shed some more light on these *ayat*.

For example, in 1951, Solomon Asch experimented with social conformity. Groups of students were invited to take part in perceptual studies. In reality, all the individuals except one – the subject of the experiment – were working for Asch. They were shown a series of three lines and they had to identify which line was the longest. The task was so easy that a 100% success rate was expected. After a couple of rounds, all the students working for Asch reported a wrong answer. The question was whether the subject of the experiment would give the right answer (and thus go against the group) or give the wrong answer in order to conform to the group's norm. In two-thirds of cases, subjects gave the wrong answer. They were later interviewed by Asch. They reported that they thought that they had figured out the right answer but they were so confused by the wrong answers of the other students *that they trusted the answers of the other students more than they trusted their own eyes* (Kassim, Feon & Markus, 2016). Milgram's experiments on obedience to authority were equally shocking. Most people were asked to commit unethical acts and continued doing so because they were ordered to by someone that had authority (Kassim, Feon & Markus, 2016). Over the last sixty years, many experiments on group behaviour show that individuals curtail their thinking in

order to confirm to group norms or in order to obey authority (Kassim, Feon & Markus, 2016).

These insights from social psychology allow commentators of the Qur'an to gain further insights into these *ayat*. From Meccan Qur'an, it is clear that political leaders and religious leaders who were fighting against the prophets used social psychology to manipulate their followers. To encourage people to think independently from their social group, Allah keeps emphasizing that individuals will be judged alone. One could argue that an important lesson in Meccan Qur'an is that individuals need question social norms and blind obedience to leaders when it leads to disobedience to Allah. Meccan Qur'an encourages individuals to start thinking for themselves. Some of the main themes in social psychology are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Main Themes in Social Psychology

<i>Part</i>	<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Main Ideas</i>
Social perception	Social self	Schemas and scripts, social comparisons
	Perceiving person	Attribution, confirmation biases, self-fulfilling prophecy
	Stereotypes, Prejudices and Discrimination	
Social influence	Attitude	Cognitive dissonance, ethical dissonance
	Conformity	Conformity, compliance, obedience
	Group processes	Group think
Social relations	Attachment and Close Relationship	Similarity and proximity
	Helping Others	
	Aggression	Objectification and de-humanization

Source: Adapted from Kassim, Feon & Markus (2016) and Taylor, Peplau, & Sears (2000)

A major thrust of this author's research is to show that social psychology allows Muslims to better understand the Qur'an, the life of the Prophet, and Islamic history. The main issues in social psychology are social conformity, social compliance and obedience to those in authority. Zimbardo (2007) compares the conventional view of psychology (which he calls DV) with the view proposed by social psychology (see Table 3)

Table 3: Dispositional View versus the Situational View

<i>Dispositional View</i>	<i>Situational View</i>
You have a good barrel of apples and a few bad apples among them	You have a bad barrel of apple. Good apples get contaminated.
DV is like the medical model of health – the disease is inside the body of the patient. The patient needs to be cured.	SV is like the public health model – the vector of disease transmission is in the environment, creating the conditions to foster the illness.

Source: Zimbardo (2007)

A very important study in social psychology was Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE). In this experiment, Zimbardo simulated a prison. Volunteers were selected to be

guards or prisoners. Zimbardo gave very few instructions to the guards. He just observed the situation evolve. As the days went by, the guards became more and more powerful and started abusing the prisoners. After a few days, the experiment was stopped.

Zimbardo (2007) explained that the aim of the experiment was to see whether the situation would overcome the disposition of the volunteers. Zimbardo notes, *“Most people are not concerned with power issues because they have enough to get by in their world. Power is the concern when people either have a lot of it and need to maintain it or when they have not much power and they want to get more.”*

Throughout the SPE, abuses of power were gradual and unconscious. The volunteers were selected because they were normal. However, the distribution of power was in favor of the guards. They unconsciously crossed the line between being a guard and being a bully. Zimbardo himself unconsciously lost control of his experiment. He was both a scientist (i.e. the head of the research team) and an actor (i.e. the superintendent of the prison) and these roles became confused. Towards the end of the experiment, the prison had ceased to be an experiment. For the guards and the prisoners, it had become real. Zimbardo ceased to be an objective observer. His role of “superintendent” had taken over his role as a scientist. It was necessary for a third-party observer to visit the SPE and confront Zimbardo before the experiment was stopped (Zimbardo, 2007).

It is not possible in one study to review the vast spectrum of the social psychology literature. A fascinating contribution was made by Ariely (2012). Ariely (2012) shows that about 98% of people will cheat if certain conditions are met. Typically, a nonmonetary reward encourages cheating. For example, he put in public places cans of Coca-Cola and dollar bills. Within a couple of days, all the cans had disappeared but not the money (Ariely, 2012, p. 32). That is one part of the problem. The second part of the problem is that cheating is infectious. When a person crosses the ethical line, he will invite a friend to do the same in order to normalize the act of cheating (Ariely, 2012, p. 195). Ariely (2012) shows that there is a social component to cheating.

Linking these observations to *Surah al-Fatihah*, the following points can be observed:

1. Managers generally have a lot of power over they subordinates
2. If one takes a social psychology perspective, the situation can overcome the disposition of both managers and subordinates
3. As this process is largely unconscious, managers will naturally abuse their power unless a specific mechanism has been put in place to prevent abuse of power.
4. The same problem arises with cheating and other acts of corruption. The social component to cheating and corruption has been well-documented but it has not been publicly discussed so most people are unaware of it.

The discussion section will explore these issues further.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reflecting on *Surah al-Fatihah*, *Surah al-Asr*, and social psychology (especially the potential for the abuse of power and the social aspect of cheating), it seems that the challenges that Muslim managers are poorly recognized. There seems to be at least three problems.

First, many people seem to assume that people are rational beings. This assumption contradicts the fact that we now know that there are two “operating systems” in every person. If one uses a computer analogy, the brain is the hardware and our minds are the software. Dubbed System 1 and System 2, scholars now know that people have “*two minds working semi-independently of one another*” (Gardner, 2009). The differences are:

- System 1 are automatic decisions based on heuristics and uses the limbic part of the brain
- System 2 are slow and rational decisions. It uses the pre-frontal cortex

Heath and Heath (2010) use an analogy. They describe System 1 is an Elephant. System 2 is the Rider on top of the Elephant. The Rider, sitting on top of the Elephant, has a precarious control over the beast. The Elephant represents our emotional and instinctive side. The Rider is our rational side. To be successful, both need to work together. Both system 1 and system 2 are necessary for our survival, so it is not useful to think of one being better than the other. Unfortunately, our reliance on System 1 makes people prone to suffer from cognitive biases. Gardner (2009) lists four well known biases. These include the confirmation bias, the anchoring effect, the representativeness heuristics, and the availability heuristics. As Fontaine, Ahmad and Oziev (2017) point out, these are not “attitude problems”. These limitations are wired into our brain. This brief review of the literature is sufficient to make the point that we are only “rational” some of the time.

Second, many people assume a rational theory of cheating. Cheating is assumed to be a question of cost-benefits analysis (Ariely, 2012). As Ariely (2012) has demonstrated, nothing can be further from the truth. Yet, the dominant view is that people insist of thinking in terms of good people and bad people. This perspective means that many people slip into unethical behavior without realizing it simply because they see themselves as a good person.

Third, many people assume a disposition view of human behavior. They completely ignore the power of the situation in shaping human behavior. As the earlier discussion shows, the massive conversions of the enemies of Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet of the enemies makes no sense if one accepts a disposition view.

These are not new problems but they might not have been crystallized in such a clear manner before. One author who came close was Fontaine (2017a). When extracting lessons in *Surah al-Baqarah*, Fontaine (2017a) observed that Allah criticizes the leaders of the Children of Israel for manipulating their followers. Schein, a pioneer in the field of organisational culture, his career as a psychologist in the United States Army. During the Korean War, thousands of American prisoners of war had been brainwashed by the Chinese. He was asked to study this new phenomenon. After leaving the army, he became a professor and realised that there were many similarities between how these prisoners or wars were treated and how American organisations indoctrinate their managers. In the 1960s, this process of brainwashing managers was obvious. Today, it is less obvious but still very much present (Coutu, 2002).

Linking brainwashing to management seems bizarre but this is because very little is known about brainwashing outside of social psychology. Typically, leaders manipulate followers by controlling their social and physical environment. Once followers modify their behaviour, they unconsciously change their thoughts to eliminate cognitive dissonance. Although the term brainwashing is popular, a more accurate description would be “behaviour-washing”. An experienced researcher studying cults went undercover and attended a weekend event organised by a cult. Galanti (1993, p. 102) wrote,

“The confusion surrounding brainwashing stems from the fact that most people are looking for something overt and foreign. I went to Camp K looking for something big and evil; what I found was very subtle and friendly thus I didn’t recognise its power. What I found was that the process works first on an emotional and a behavioural one. The need for love and approval-upon which cult members play- leads to psychological and behavioural identification with the group. Over time, beliefs change as well, but more through the repression of the intellect than the changing of the intellect.”

The last sentence – *“the repression of the intellect rather than changing the intellect”* – resonates with the author. When visiting students doing their practical training, one of them said, *“I got scolded so many times that I am afraid to think”*. Brainwashing in management is not a plot by evil managers. More often than not, it is the consequences of managers having extremely difficult targets to achieve. They naturally influence their subordinates but they can very easily cross the ethical line without realising it. In his discussion, Fontaine (2017a) proposed to divide organisational cultures into three categories:

1. *Positive organisational cultures* – these are organisations that use their resources to help their employees strengthen their Islamic identity.
2. *Neutral organisational cultures* – these are organisations that are not actively helping their employees develop an Islamic identity but they are not actively preventing them from doing so either.
3. *Negative organisational cultures* – these are organisations that demand complete loyalty to the organisation. If there is a clash between loyalty to Allah and loyalty to the organisation, employees are expected to be loyal to the organisation.

Fontaine (2017a) suggested that the primary ethical responsibility of Muslim leaders is to develop an organisation with a positive organisational culture. Similarly, the primary responsibility of Muslim employees is to only seek employment in organisations in organisations that have a positive or neutral organisational culture. By extension, the primary responsibility of a Muslim manager is to work in an organisation that has a positive or neutral organisational culture. Even if he or she does so, it doesn’t guarantee that there will not be abuses to power. The process of *tawasi bil haq* and *tawasi bil sabr* must still be in place.

Tawasi-bil haq and *tawasi-bil sabr* work in three ways:

1. Through a process of consultation, the decision-making process is slowed down. This enables the important decisions to be looked at in a more rational manner. Psychology tells us an important reality. Bad decision making is not an “attitude problem”, it is a process problem. Individuals who make decisions alone are more likely to make bad decisions (Tichy & Bennis, 2007).
2. Through a process of consultation, social norms can be negotiated. In many of the social psychology experiments, social norms are influenced by group behavior. This group behavior is often characterized by little or no verbal communication. When people learn to ask, *“why are we behaving in this way?”*, it is possible to develop more positive social norms.
3. Through a process of consultation – especially with a third-party that is not directly involved in a situation (like a coach or a mentor) – abuses of power can be limited or eliminated. The idea is not to add another level of supervision but to emphasize learning and coaching.

All these depend on Muslim managers being exposed to the principles of social psychology. This need not be a new course but it can be embedded into existing courses. For example, there are a number of videos on YouTube that explains the Asch paradigm, the Milgram experiment, or the Stanford Prison Experiment. Zimbardo (2007) has argued that it is essential that students be taught about key concepts in social psychology so that it becomes easier for them not to be easily influenced by individuals with more power and authority.

Limitations of this Study

Due to space limitations, certain topics were not investigated. Having studied several *surahs* of the Qur'an, it is clear that Allah emphasizes the rights of non-Muslims.

In *Surah 'Ali Imran*, Allah says, “*you are the best ummah raised for humanity*” (3:110). Had the wording been “*min al-nās*”, it would mean “*you are the best nation*” but the *ayah* says “*li al-nās*”. This *ummah* has been created to serve humanity (Fontaine, 2017b).

In *Surah an-Nisa*, Allah stresses that Muslims should strive for justice in all matters. However, during the life of the Prophet, an incident happened. A Muslim stole a coat of mail from another Muslim. As an investigation had started, he hid the coat of mail in the house of a Jew. The innocent Jew was accused of the theft. However, the thief's tribe came out to support the wrongdoer by using religion as an excuse. Before the matter was brought to the Prophet, an *ayah* was revealed ordering him not to be swayed by these emotional arguments. (4:105).

- a. In *Surah al-Ma'idah* (the last *surah* to be revealed), Allah reiterates the principle of justice for all of humanity. Having liberated Mecca, the Muslims were now in a position to abuse their power. So Allah warns the Muslims, “*And do not let the hatred of a people for having obstructed you from al-Masjid al-Haram lead you to transgress. And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty*” (5:02). This reiterates the principle found in *Surah an-Nisa* – one cannot use religion as an excuse to take away the rights of non-Muslims. Allah then tells the believers to “*persistently stand up for Allah, witnesses to justice (qist)*” (5:8). The empathic form is used that indicates that believers stand up repeatedly for justice. There are two words for justice in the Qur'an, *qist* and *'adl*. *Qist* is when one feels morally obligated to do what is just. *'Adl* refers to a dispute that is settled in a court of law. Both are important but morality is emphasised in this *ayah*. Allah has put the love for justice in the nature of all people. However, Allah wants the believers to stand up for justice (*qist*) for His sake. The hatred for other people should not prevent one from being just (*'adl*). At least, one must meet the minimum standard of justice that can stand in court.
- b. The rights of non-Muslims have been discussed by scholars over the centuries. Generally, non-Muslims have to be treated with dignity and justice (al-Qaradawi, 1999). Al-Qaradawi (1999) quotes three narrations to establish the severity of hurting non-Muslims unjustly. For example, the Prophet said,
- c. “*He who hurts a dhimmi hurts me, and he who hurts me annoys Allah*” (al-Tabarani)
- d. The point is that Muslim managers may be very aware of not transgressing the rights of Muslim subordinates but they may be more careless about the rights of non-Muslim subordinates. This is a large topic that merits a separate study.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it is argued that there are three kinds of Muslim managers.

Some Muslim managers are blessed. They uphold the minimum standard set out in *Surah al-Asr*. In practice, this means that they are very careful not to abuse their power and they respect the rights of all their subordinates, irrespective of race, religion, or gender. This suggests that they actively seek counsel from colleagues or friends. However, it is dangerous to think of them as “good Muslims”. It is quite possible that a Muslim manager is a good manager at the beginning of his or her career. As he or she gets promoted, he or she has to deal with more and more ambiguous situations. He or she gains more power. Again, social psychology tells that many people do not consciously cross ethical lines. They often do so unknowingly, responding to the social norms of their equally powerful peers. Whatever decision is made can be rationalized. There is a very fine line between being an ethical manager and an unethical one.

Some Muslim managers break the minimum standard in regards to their actions set out in *Surah al-Asr*. Although they may be labelled as “bad Muslims”, such labeling is too convenient. Many unethical Muslim managers lost their sense of perspective and abused their power. However, it is possible that as they grow older, they repent. One hears many stories of individuals who leave the corporate sector, start learning their religion, and then gradually realize that they have made many mistakes. They spend their retirement crying out of shame and fear for what they have done. They may have been unethical Muslim managers but they may die as believers.

Some Muslim managers are simply lost. They break the minimum standard in relation to faith that is set out in *Surah al-Asr*. This may be because they have never been interested in religion. They might have learned a few basic ideas at school but they never investigated these ideas further. It is again quite possible that as they grow older, they start questioning their purpose in life and rediscover their religion.

It is obvious that the conclusion to this study is ambiguous. This, the author believes, reflects the overall spirit of the Qur'an. Nothing can be taken for granted. The best people must be fearful of their mistakes. The worst people must trust Allah's mercy and His ability to guide people from darkness into light. It also reflects the life of the Prophet. Some of the most virulent enemies of Islam – like Abu Sufian and Khalid ibn Walid to name only two – became heroes. If the Qur'an was sufficient to guide the Quraish, it is sufficient to guide anyone.

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