Diversity Management from an Islamic Perspective

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the values and wisdom that the religion of Islam provides with regards to diversity, equity and equal opportunities in the workplace. This chapter will attempt to discuss a humanistic approach to diversity management emphasizing the religious and spiritual achievements through human development, based on the Islamic teachings. First, an introduction about diversity management will be given, as well as a descriptive of the major critics reported in the literature on diversity management. Second, an overview of the concept of work and management from the Islamic tradition will be given, as well as their significance for the spiritual and material life. Third, the concept of diversity and diversity management will be explored from an Islamic perspective based on the major sources of prescription in Islam which are "The Qur'an" and "Sunna". The Qur'an is the Holy book of Muslims that contains the revealed words of God, and the Sunna is the sayings and doings of the prophet Mohammed. The last part of this chapter will discuss the implications of the wisdom and values of the Islamic perspective of diversity management in contributing to the enrichment of the humanistic management approach. Furthermore, the Islamic perspective of diversity management will be presented as an alternative approach to counter the drawbacks of the economic case of the actual diversity management discourse.

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2 Diversity and Diversity Management: Overview and Discourse

Currently, there is a gradual increase in the debate about diversity management and inclusiveness in the workplace because of globalization. Managing people on a global scale requires organizations to face challenges of cultural obstacles regarding achieving competitiveness and the expected return on investment. However, many questions arise regarding the motivations of organizations and businesses in managing diversity namely the degree of importance of ethics and respect of human dignity versus profit maximization. This section will first give an overview about the actual discourse concerning diversity management benefits which is expected by companies, then discusses the major critics reported in the literature, and finally suggests some alternative approaches for promoting ethical and moral diversity management.

Traditionally diversity was focused on racial and gender differences (Grant and Kleiner 1997). The term "Diversity" is the state of being different and varied (Kisin 2013, p. 817). Williams and O'Reilly (1998), defined diversity as being any attribute that is salient and that makes a person perceive that he or she is different from the others. In an organizational context, diversity refers to a varied combination of demographic attitudes, characteristics, and expertise contributed by individuals. Diversity embraces difference(s) and propagates the inclusions of so far underrepresented groups, be they women or ethnic, religious, national or sexual minorities, as well as individuals of different professional or educational backgrounds, on teams and on all hierarchical levels of the organization (Kisin 2013, p. 817).

Workplace diversity has become a common reality in many companies across the world in today's global market. In a diverse and heterogeneous workplace environment, individuals can show a discriminatory and hostile behavior towards people representing a minority group in the organization. Such behavior usually leads to problems such as a decrease in employees' performance, de-motivation, high turnover, and an increase in workplace conflicts (Tayeb 1997). This diversity in the work place made it necessary for organizations to change their culture to recognize the heterogeneity of their labor force. Businesses are then encouraged to implement a culture in which every employee can pursue his or her own career goals without being constrained by gender, race, religion, nationality, or any other factor that is irrelevant to work performance (Curtis and Dreachslin 2008).

Diversity management refers to the planned and systematic commitment of organizations to recruit, retain, reward and promote their heterogeneous employees with diverse backgrounds and abilities (Thomas 1992). This is done through the implementation of strategies and interventions that allow the involvement and integration of all employees. Such interventions could be in the form of training, mentoring, performance appraisal, or team building. The objective of diversity management is to create a multicultural organization that does not focus its efforts

Table 1 Diversity management as a business case

Economic rationale
–Improves productivity, and encourages more innovative solutions to problems and thus profits
–Assists the understanding of a great number of customer needs, thus increasing the customers' base and turnover
–Enhances corporate competitiveness and continued survival
–Helps lower the likelihood of litigation

Source: Lorbiecki and Jack (2000)

of the dominant group of employees but rather establishes equal opportunities for all (Süss and Kleiner 2007) and fosters a productive and friendly work environment.

The increasing diversity in the workplace has been recommended and suggested as a mean of enhancing organizations' performance. Effectively managing a diverse workplace can have economic benefits and achieve competitive advantage. Potential benefits include higher creativity and innovation, better decision-making, problem solving, success in marketing with more insights and cultural sensitivity, and improved distribution of economic opportunity (Cox 1991; Cox and Blake 1991; Lorbiecki and Jack 2000). Further literature suggests that managing diversity may result in higher organizational productivity, and ultimately in higher profits (Cox and Smolinski 1994). Table 1 summarizes the main arguments for making diversity management an economic case.

As the diversity management topic has gained momentum in the global market, its business and economic argument has become the focus (Curtis and Dreachslin 2008; Gilbert et al. 1999; Jamali et al. 2010; Lorbiecki and Jack 2000). It has been argued that such orientation of the debate was hoped to account for the interests of the most powerful organizational stakeholders (business owners/managers) to entice them to find ways to improve the treatment of historically excluded and disadvantaged groups (Konrad 2003). Consequently, moral arguments were lagging behind, leaving the floor to the economic arguments to dominate a debate that is essentially humanitarian, and view diversity management as a tool that uses people's diversity as a mean for achieving economic goals (Lorbiecki and Jack 2000).

Consequently, the above discussion underlines the need to emphasize individuals in organizations and re-establish the moral and ethical concerns of diversity management discourse for promoting integrity, human dignity, and equality in the workplace. Humanistic management has been introduced as an alternative perspective to the economic case of management. Melé (2003) defines humanistic management as management that stresses the human condition and is oriented to the development of human virtue, in all its forms to its fullest extent. It suggests that businesses should respect the humanity of people by treating them as an end and never as a mere means, involve them in business in a way appropriate to each situation, and create a culture where people can exercise freedom with a sense of responsibility and an awareness of making a real contribution to human well-being (Melé 2013; Spitzeck 2011). In the context of this chapter, and reflecting on the humanistic management approach, it could be suggested to return to spirituality and

Islamic religious teachings to foster virtue and wisdom for a humanistic approach of diversity management.

The following sections will describe the values and wisdom that Islam offers to diversity management through the understanding of the dimensions of diversity and work—at the individual and societal level, and their implications for believers as a moral obligation. This aims to address the drawbacks of the economic case of diversity management by providing insights on the expected spiritual achievements of Muslim believers rather than the material success and wealth accumulation.

3 Islamic View of Diversity and Equity

Islam means the peaceful "submission" and "obedience" to the orders of God and his messenger with love, hope and fear. It is not only a religion prescribing to prayers, worshiping and rituals, but it is more a way of life that shapes the entire existence and behavior of every individual believer as a single person and as a member of the society (Beekun and Badawi 2005; Syed and Ali 2010).

Islam is considered by Muslims as a non-human made institution; as the Qur'an contains the words of God revealed to his Prophet Mohammed more than 1400 years ago. The deeds of its believers are therefore inseparable from the divine commandments. Qur'an asserts that humans are held responsible for the consequences of their deeds, and that they are able to choose and to intervene in their own destiny. However, they have been given guidance to manage their life, with the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed which they should use to steer their actions and beliefs (Tayeb 1997).

4 Diversity: A Sign of Divine Creation

Based on the Islamic teachings, human diversity is a sign of divine creation. God has created all humans equal and forbids any form of discrimination between people. Only God can judge people and his judgment is based on the deeds that people perform in their life. According to the Qur'an, the creation of the heavens and earth and the creation of diverse people with different colors and languages scattered around the world, is one of God's divine signs. As the following verse of the Qur'an (2010) confirms:

> One of His signs is that He created you from dust—lo and behold!—you became human and scattered far and wide. Another of His signs is this that He created spouses from among yourselves for you to live within tranquility: He ordained love and kindness between you. There truly are signs for those who reflect. Another of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and colors. There truly are signs in this for those who know (...) (30:20–23).

According to the Islamic teachings, life is a test for human beings in which they have been given guidance and freedom to make choices about their actions, until the day of judgment in which everyone will be rewarded for his deeds, as it is stated in the following verse of the Qur'an: *"We have adorned the earth with attractive things so that we test people to find out which of them do best"* (18:07).

Humans were created with different races and appearance, wealth and possessions, abilities, and social classes for the purpose of testing on who follows God's guidance and performs best in deeds. Those differences create a challenge for humans throughout their lives as they are expected to help, support and protect each other.

5 Islam and Multiculturalism

The diversities of races, tribes, colors are not without a purpose. God has blessed humans with diversity as it is for a constructive purpose. The Islamic prescriptions teaches Muslims that human diversity is expected to encourage them learning and understanding each other. Diversity is meant to improve and develop human conditions though hard work and increased knowledge.

> People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another. In God's eyes, the most honored of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware (Qur'an 2010, 49:13).

The Prophet Mohammed, in his last sermon to the pilgrims of Makkah highlighted the equality of human beings and emphasized the acceptance and respect of diversity:

> All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor does a black have any superiority over white except by piety and good action (Amatullah 2014).

Acknowledging and managing diversity can be traced back to the history of Islamic governance in which several examples can be found. The recognition and respect of diversity can be observed when the Prophet drafted the Medina (the medieval city) Charter in conjunction with the 22 Arabian and Jewish tribes, he accentuated pluralism and multiculturalism. The Medina Charter promoted the equal status and rights between Muslims and non-Muslims and gave them equal rights to intervene in governmental matters. Further examples can be drawn from the history of the Islamic dynasties; the Ummayad (661–750 AD) for example appointed non-Muslims to run finance, diplomatic and administration positions. The Ottoman dynasty (1281–1923) appointed non-Muslims in many key governing positions, which is in accordance with the teachings of Islam on the respect of equality and diversity of humans (Muhtada 2012).

6   Islam and Gender Equality

The Qur'an prohibits discrimination based on gender. Many verses in the holy Qur'an reflect the gender equality and treat men and women equally without any discrimination.

> For men and women who devoted to God—believing men and women, obedient men and women, truthful men and women, steadfast men and women, humble men and women, charitable men and women, fasting men and women, chaste men and women, men and women who remember God often—God has prepared forgiveness and rich reward (Qur'an 2010, 33:35).

This verse of the Qur'an stresses on the equality between the two genders and states "men" and "women" distinctly and repeatedly in order to emphasize it. In fact, other verses in the holy book give guidance about different aspects of life by employing words such as people, believers, humanity, or community. However, we can find different verses about gender equality clearly mentioning the two genders, in which God gives believers evidence of the equality of men and women before him.

Additional verses of the Qur'an that strengthen the gender equality state:

> If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female, and have faith, they will enter paradise and not the least injustice will be done to them (4:124).
>
> I will not allow the deeds of any one of you to be lost, whether you are male or female, each is like the other (3:195).

The Qur'an emphasizes the idea that good deeds of all humans will be rewarded regardless of their gender. It also promotes the equal partnership between men and women that should respect and protect each other. Such emphasis on male-female equity can be found in the traditions of the Prophet. In the previously cited last sermon to the pilgrims of Makkah, the Prophet mentioned the importance of women in society: "O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women but they also have rights over you. . .Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. . ." (Amatullah 2014).

Islam is not a religion that gives men supremacy over the public and private life, nor does it limit women to the private sphere (Syed and Ali 2010), but rather calls for an ethical behavior of Muslims based on God's guidance. One of the most valuable examples and role model for Muslim women is Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet Mohammed who was one of the important business women in the ancient Arabia. Khadija owned a flourishing business caravan. In addition to performing her duty as a mother and wife, she co-managed the business with her husband and supported him in his mission to spread the message of Islam. Furthermore, she was of constant financial and moral support for the Prophet and had an active presence in the public space (Syed and Ali 2010). Likewise, the second Caliph Umar Ibn Al Khattab (634–644 AD) and one of the greatest companions of the Prophet, appointed a woman Shaffa Bint Abdullah as a market supervisor in Medina (Al Khayat 2003).

Based on the above, the case of gender equality presents ample evidence in the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet that seem to grant women and men equal rights and promotes gender equality in the economic activity of believers. On the other hand, the discourse about gender equality and women modesty is much larger than what is covered in this chapter, due to the scope of our discussion. However, it is important to mention that there are different interpretations of the Islamic sources about the concept of female equity which is contested by the Islamic scholars. The orthodox Islamic scholars refer to a number of traditions of the prophet to support their patriarchal views on female seclusion and gender segregation. Various traditions are cited to project a restrictive account of female modesty (e.g. collection of the saying of the Prophet by Tirmidhi). However their authenticity and contexts are a matter of debate in Islamic research (Syed 2008).

7   Islam and Brotherhood

Despite the concept of diversity of human beings, Islam makes a great emphasis on the concepts of unity and brotherhood. Helping each other in the light of social virtues and righteousness is a duty for every member of the Muslim community "Umma".

"(. . .) *Help one another in the righteousness and virtue; but help not one another in sin and transgression*" Qur'an (5:3). The Prophet said: "Go to the help of your brother whether oppressor or oppressed", he was asked "We know what is meant by going to the help of brother who is oppressed, but how shall we help a brother who is oppressor?" The prophet replied: "By restraining him from oppressing others" (Khan et al. 2010).

Some of the main values that should be respected and guide the believers' lives while dealing with others regardless of their diversities are; God-consciousness (taqwa), Love, doing good (ihsan), justice (àdl), and equality (musawah). The religion stresses the virtue of mutual support and help of the community as a duty for every believer to maintain the equilibrium of a fair and just life. Islam provides a framework within which people can live their life and fulfill their duty of serving God with piety, justice and equity. The Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet (Sunna) clearly give enough evidence that Islam considers diversity as a sign of the divine creation and supports equality of human beings without any form of discrimination be it gender, race, cultural, or other forms of diversity. Those teachings offer guidance for the personal, social and economic life of every Muslim.

8 Islamic Approach of Work and Management

Work from an Islamic perspective is an obligatory activity and a virtue in light of the needs of human beings and the necessity to establish equilibrium in one's individual and social life (Ali 1988). Individuals who have the mental and physical ability are exhorted to work in order to earn their living and are not allowed to become a liability on their families or on the state through idleness. Hard work in Islam is highly valued and considered as a religious observance and a spiritual fulfillment. Individuals seek God's reward in life and the hereafter through their contribution to the development of their society by lawful (halal) activity. According to the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed, he said: "Work is worship". Also, in another tradition, the Prophet was once sitting with his companions, who, when seeing a strong young man, said: "Alas for that man! Had it been for his power and sturdiness to be for jihad in the cause of God". The Prophet then replied: "Do not say so! For he is striving to obtain himself from begging people, he is in the cause of God. And he is striving for the sake of weak parents or progeny to suffice them; he is in the cause of God" (Syed and Ali 2010, p. 457).

In order to assure a healthy and effective work environment, the Islamic tradition sets the pillars and guidelines of work ethics that should be respected by the believers. The religion calls for an equitable and fair distribution of wealth in the society and urges for honesty and justice in trade and business management. Therefore, a manager should perform his work following the ethical guidance that the Islamic tradition dictates. "Akhlaq" is the appropriate term in Arabic that stands for the translation of the word ethics. Ethics, according to western sociologists is relatively dependent on individual perspective in order to determine good or bad. However, in Islam, the source of ethics is its religious institutions, transmitting a divine revelation to mankind. In other words, the Qur'an and Sunna automatically become the source of Akhlaq in Islam. Thus, all modes of behavior and character traits derived their goodness or badness from the sanction or otherwise of the holy book and the sayings and practices of the prophet Muhammed who himself has been described as the best model of behavior for all believers. In the context of management and leadership the values of business ethics are extracted from the teachings of the previously cited religious prescriptions that shape employers and managers behavior.

Obligations and duties are defined for the worker towards his or her work as well as towards his employer. A believer must be dedicated to his work to justify his earnings and at the same time to be a role model for believers and non-believers. Islam makes it an obligation for the worker to perform the tasks which he has contracted to the best of his ability, but since individuals are endowed with different abilities and talents, their productivities will differ and none is expected to do more than his capacity. According to the Qur'an, believers are expected to respect their written contracts and accomplish the agreed terms of their employments. "*O you who have attained faith, Be true to your covenants*" Qur'an (5:1). Muslim employees are expected to be honest while performing their work and trustworthy,

for example with regards to the protection of the information or material related to their work.

As a matter of fact, obligations apply on the employers as well. Employers and managers must be just and equitable toward their employees, honest, respectful, trustworthy and seek consultation. Managers are expected to be just in their management practices. For example, recruitment and employee selection must be based on competencies. Employees should not be appointed based on their race, age, gender, wealth, or alike, but rather on their skills to perform the work. The Qur'an states: "*God commands you (people) to return things entrusted to you to their rightful owners, and if you judge between people, to do so with justice: God's instructions to you are excellent, for He hears and sees everything*" (4:58). Accordingly, managers are then expected to be just and fair in the compensation of their employees. Wages have to be decided based on skills, quality and quantity of work to be performed avoiding discrimination.

Honesty is one more value that managers have to have towards their employees. As to illustrate; managers should inform the truth about the job to perform while hiring, in addition to any other information pertaining to the activity, to make sure that applicants will not be expected to perform beyond their capacity (Hashim 2010).

Based on the concept of equality between human beings, managers have to respect their employees and protect their dignity. The hierarchical positions within the organization do not justify harsh treatment nor help increase notoriety within subordinates (Beekun 2012). Managers are called to be kind and respectful to their employees. The Prophet said: "One who mistreats those under him will not enter paradise" (Syed and Ali 2010). Managers are expected to keep their word and assume their responsibilities for which they were entrusted. Trustworthiness in Islam has an additional meaning related to man's role of trustee on earth that must bear responsibility for his own actions.

Additional values promoted by the Islamic business ethics are consensus-build or consultation in decision making (Beekun 2012). According to the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet, decisions in management of business and in public affairs should be done on consultation. In the Qur'an God commends "(. . .) *Keep up the prayer; conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; give others out of what We have provided for them*" (42:38). In addition, the Prophet said: "He who consults is guarded against regret" and said also "Meet your obligations while not overlooking your entitlements." This means that consultation should be based on mutual trust, good intention and within the scope of the contract (Syed and Ali 2010).

Islamic tradition considers the resources and wealth to which man has access to not being his, but rather a loan by God to fulfill his responsibilities using them in a fair and correct manner (Beekun 2012). Therefore, and as stated by Beekun and Badawi (2005), managers must delegate the responsibilities associated with their position toward other stakeholders as a sign of trustworthiness.

9 Discussion

Moral business in Islam can pursue its economic goals but not at the expense of its moral duties to individuals and to the society. Islamic work ethics provide a set of guidelines that promote lawful and just economic activities. According to the previously discussed values that are drawn from the Islamic teachings, diversity management with equity and justice is more than a managerial task, it is a religious obligation for every Muslim believer. Respecting the moral and ethical duties while working is considered as an act of worshiping which necessitates piety and equity motivated by the desire to please God.

Giving the values and precepts drawn from the Islamic tradition, it is clear that the religion orders business managers to treat employees equally based on their skills, and seek their well-being by protecting their human dignity. In addition, the Islamic teachings on diversity management promote justice regardless of the differences in the hierarchical levels or any other form of diversity. Besides, the discussed values make an important focus on individuals and on the development of the human condition while seeking the excellence and great reward in this life and the hereafter.

It is important to mention that there is a congruence between diversity management based on the Islamic work ethic and the humanistic management approach. The Islamic traditions offer rich and insightful values that can deepen the debate on diversity management within a humanistic approach. Furthermore, it can offer a spiritual source of motivation for both managers and employers, for a higher commitment for implementing a value-based management.

The recent research on humanistic management suggested several contributions for the reinforcement of the individual-oriented management view aiming to more respect for the humanity of people within organizations. Melé (2013) discusses a number of managerial approaches that contribute to the development of the humanistic approach; for example the increased focus on people with more involvement and participation within the organization, considering the organization as a human community, giving importance to peoples' involvement in organizations, giving more importance to personal competences, and value-based management. Such contributions could be enhanced through further research on the topic of diversity management based on the Islamic traditions and contribute then to further developments for an alternative approach to counter its economic case of diversity management.

10 Conclusion

The present chapter has given an overview about the concepts of diversity, management and Islamic work ethics. The interface of those three concepts is aimed to draw values and wisdom to promote a humanistic approach to diversity management, based on the Islamic teachings.

Islam values diversity and considers it as a sign of the divine creation. Diversity should not create barriers or cause animosities among people, but rather enable human beings to better know each other, and strive for the development and the improvement of the human condition while preserving inner and outer peace. It is also a religion that calls for the development of human beings through continuous learning and hard working and puts great emphasis on work that is considered as a form of worshiping. Engaging in economic activities is an obligation in order to fulfill one's needs, foster personal growth and establish equilibrium in social life. The idea of personal development goes beyond the improvement of the material life, but rather emphasizes the enrichment of the spiritual needs. This enrichment is done through the good deeds that are performed by believers throughout their lives and the satisfaction that they gain having followed the guidance of God and seeking His blessings.

Islamic work ethics has set guidelines and rules for governing the relationship of organizations with their employees and set obligations for employees vis-à-vis their employers. Fundamental concepts in business management have been dictated such as equity, justice, human dignity and fairness and insist on the engagement in lawful work while protecting and preserving the interests of the individuals and the community. Islam presented those central concepts regardless of gender, race, or ethnic groups, and made the unique basis to differentiate people before God their piety and righteousness. Islamic work ethics give importance to cooperation and consultation in work as an efficient way of overcoming obstacles and avoiding mistakes. It also puts an emphasis on the accompanying intentions rather than the results of work.

Given that Islam is an important component in everyday's life in an important number of Muslim Majority Countries (MMC) and has dominant role in shaping business practices (Syed and Ali 2010; Syed et al. 2010; Syed and Özbilding 2009), the Islamic faith is likely to have a significant influence on diversity management practices in those countries. Values that are promoted by the Islamic teachings can be used in order to shift people's paradigm about diversity acceptance and the implementation of managerial best practices, especially regarding gender issues and women's equal opportunities in the job market. Organizations can cultivate values based on Islamic teachings of diversity, multiculturalism, equity, justice and fairness. Values such as tolerance (tasamuh), understanding (Ta'aruf), fairness (adl) and clarification (tabayun) can be used within organizations in order to promote diversity management within MMCs.

In today's business context of capitalistic orientations that seeks wealth accumulation and profit maximization, applying the Islamic principles of management

faces great challenges. According to Ali (1988), treating employees' interests as complementary to employers', as suggested by the Islamic prescriptions is far reaching in contexts marked by economic pressure. The existing literature on the influence of Islam on management practices argues that there is a gap between the theory of Islamic principles of management and the actual practices in the Arab Muslim world (Branine and Pollard 2006; Syed and Ali 2010). The major reason is that organizations in Muslim countries are highly influenced by western business practices. In addition, national culture values and non-Islamic traditions exercise a considerable influence on management behavior in those counties. For that, it is highly interesting to engage in further research for specific Muslim contexts in order to explore and understand the national and cultural considerations for the contribution to the literature on ethical diversity management practices.

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