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Conceptualizing the Islamic Personality Model

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Abstract

The field of personality or individual psychology has attracted a lot of researchers around the world to devote their efforts in conceptualizing, assessing, and establishing the nomological nets of various personality models and theories. However, some models and theories of personality are limited in their utilization. For example, there are a lot of instances where researchers are unable to derive a clear factor structure when applying the Big Five Personality Traits in their research works due to cultural and values incompatibility. Therefore, this paper attempts to conceptualize and develop a measure of Islamic Personality Model that addresses the issue of incompatibility through the application of both qualitative and quantitative research design. The outcome of this study is to produce a model and measure of Islamic Personality that will benefit the community of researchers in general and Islamic researchers and students, in particular.

1. Background

Recently, Malaysia has undergone a tremendous development in various areas namely, manufacturing, agriculture, retail and business, and banking and other types of services. The development has triggered the concerted efforts to further improve these areas by formulating the 12 NKREA. One of the 12 NKREA is on the educational transformation. The main focus is on the enhancement of Human Capital in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies or abilities so that the human capital can contribute more effectively and efficiently to the development of our economy and the country as a whole.

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The process of enhancing the human capital cannot be effectively done without the availability of the right tools to measure its traits, abilities and competencies. To date, there are a lot of existing measures of personality traits. However, they are lacking of one most crucial element of generalization; consistently measuring the construct across various populations. Some studies especially those conducted in Asia countries that adapted these existing measures failed to obtain a clear structure of the construct when conducting a factor analysis (Karim, Zamzuri & Nor, 2009; Mohd Yusoff, Othman & Othman, 2013). The most probable reason for the occurrence is the cultural or values incompatibility.

The most popular study on cultural discrepancies was conducted by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) involving five cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity-femininity, long term-short term orientation, and indulgence-restraint. He found that Malaysia scored low on individualism and high on power distance as compared to the US. However, if the comparison is made among the Islamic countries (i.e., Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Iraq and Bangladesh), the scores are quite similar. The findings of the study indicate that citizens of Islamic countries share similar cultural values that vary significantly with those of the Western countries. Due to different cultural orientations or values, there is an urgent need to develop a specific model of Islamic Personality that can be reliably used to describe the individual Muslim personality traits. The proposed research is also intended to develop a measure that can be applied to discriminate individuals into different groups which have varying psychological, affective and behavioral consequences. This measure will be validated using construct, concurrent, convergent and divergent validities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Existing Personality Models

Among the various literature streams on psychology and human behavior, the Big Five personality traits are among the most commonly tested and debated. The Big Five personality traits provide a model of personality structure that represents the co-variation among personality traits across individuals. History of the Big Five personality factors began with Catell's (1943) identification of 4,500 personality items, which are later trimmed down into 35 variables through clustering procedures.

These variables formed 12 personality factors which eventually became part of his 16 Personality Factors (Catell, Eber & Tatsuoka, 1970). Catell's pioneering work was then replicated and expanded by Norman (1963) who into five factor structure; extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and culture. The term 'Big Five' was later chosen by Goldberg (1981) to emphasize that each of these factors is extremely broad, abstract and distinct in explaining personality characteristics. Goldberg (1992) used a different approach which factors are measured using bipolar adjective scales which is proven in terms of internal consistency and replicable factor structure.

The most comprehensive instrument is Costa and McCrae's (1992) 240-item NEO Personality Inventory, Revised (NEO-PI-R), which permits measurement of the Big-Five domains. Their early analyses produced the ubiquitous Extraversion, Neuroticism and Openness dimensions which described the 'NEO' acronym. The model is later extended with inclusion of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness factors in view of the convergence of their scale with Goldberg's adjective-based measures of the Big Five. According to Costa and McCrae (1992), the Big Five is viewed as causal personality dispositions, since people have different individual perception based on their adaptation to the social landscape.

Costa and McCrae's (1992) five factor model received its fair share of criticism, especially from Eysenck (1992) which highlights that three of the five factors are intercorrelated and not all of the five factors are factored analyzed at the highest level. Eysenck (1991) developed Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-S) to study personality characteristics by assessing three dimensions of personality: extraversion (social, carefree and impulsive), neuroticism (anxiety, moodiness and depression) and psychoticism (trusting, warm and helpful). EPQR-S is a continuity of his prior personality measures development, which is the Two Factor Model -Extraversion and Neuroticism (Eysenck, 1947) and the Three Factor Model – Extraversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976)

The HEXACO (Honesty–Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness) model was introduced by Ashton, Lee, Perugini, Szarota, de Vries, Di Blas, Boies and De Raad (2004) by combining the elements of religiosity and personality into a single holistic view. The HEXACO model is assumed to out-predict the Five Factor/Big Five model with regard to a variety of variables including materialism, unethical business decisions, workplace delinquency, voting behavior, sexual attractiveness, sociosexuality, phobic tendency, psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, egoism, risk taking and humorousness (Aghababaei, 2012).

Other notable historical theories of personality developed by behavioural scientists that are lesser known by nonetheless discussed in the human behaviour literature streams are the Alternative five model of personality (Zuckerman, Kuhlman, Thornquist, & Kiers, 1991), and Temperament and Character Inventory (Cloninger, 1994). A variety of existing Personality measures is used by researchers to study the dimensions of personality as antecedents to job performance, work satisfaction, motivation and organizational commitment. Among the prominent personality instruments used among the behavioral scholars are the NEO-Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1985), NEO-Five Factor Inventory (Costa & McRae, 1992), IPIP-International Personality Inventory Pool (Goldberg, 1999), RIASEC-Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (Holland, 1997), CEI-Claims Examiner Inventory (Arneson, Millikin-Davies & Hogan, 1993), and CPI-California Psychological Inventory (Johnson, 1997).

Each of the personality measures has its own limitations and several issues surfaced regarding the structure of the personality measures. For example, Costa and McCrae's (1985) NEO-PI model assumes that there are no effects of culture on personality traits. There is a concern of the Big Five's weak replicability for non-Western languages and cultures, especially on the fifth Big Five factor (John & Srivastava, 1999). In terms of Goldberg's (1992) model, construct differences exist between IPIP and NEO-PI-R in terms of factor loadings, although both are based on Digman's (1990) Big Five personality theory.

A study conducted by Karim et al. (2009) using Goldberg's (1992) personality scale found that only two factor loadings appeared, and few items are omitted from each of the five conceptualized factors due to high cross loadings when factor analyzed. Despite there were series of studies which showed that the same factor structure was found in a wide variety of cultures (McCrae & Costa, 1997), recent findings showed that only three factors of personality are fully replicable across languages and cultures (De Raad et al., 2010). These prompt researchers to establish personality inventories to cater for non-western culture such as the Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory (CPAI) and the South African Personality Inventory (SAPI) (Cheung et al., 1996).

In the secular Western culture, it is often believed that it is not necessary to believe in God to develop one's character. This may be so because the Supreme Being is conceived as an external, negative entity that stands between individuals and their happiness, forbidding enjoyable activities and punishing those who engage in them. However, God, religion and spirituality have been helpful to many aspiring toward personal self-improvement. Islam teaches its followers to abide to good deeds and avoid destructive behaviour as a part of everyday's life, whether it's personal or work related.

Personality factors were considered as the predictors of religiosity, emotional religion and spirituality (Saroglou & Munoz-Garcia, 2008), thus implicating that personality factors and religiosity have similarities. Researchers also have attempted to discover religiosity in individual's personality. In addressing the need for an epistemological Islamic model of human sciences, Buang (2010) proposed a grand theory in Islamic human geography that is capable of addressing the continuous failure of the western theory in arriving at a single coherent theoretical principle. However, no such clear constructs or measures exist at the moment.

2.2 Islamic Personality Measure

More often than not, results from studies on personality in the local context indicate divergence of findings when compared with the established Big Five construct. Mastor, Jin and Cooper's (2000) study on Malay personality, found that the items under the Openness and Extraversion facets failed to form a clear factor structure. A study using NEO-PI-R in Indonesia (largest Islamic country by population) by Halim, Derksen and van der Staak (2004) indicate that there is low internal reliability for some facets of the Big Five inventory, and the Openness to Experience

domain fail to produce a high congruence coefficient, which the researchers attribute to 'dogmatic attachment to values'.

Islam gives merit on personality that involves virtue and good deeds. Muslims are considered servants of God and Muslims should engage in good deeds in both business and personal life (Abbas & Gibbs, 1998). In Suratul Baqarah Allah says "But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall admit them to Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), abiding therein forever. Therein they shall have Azwajun Mutahharatun (purified mates or wives), and We shall admit them to shades wide and ever deepening" (Al-Baqarah, 22). Muslims who believe and practice Islam will likely be more committed to their organizations and presumably more satisfied with their jobs (Yousef, 2001). Muslims behavior patterns are mostly based on guided decision that has been revealed by Quran with the term *'al-rushd'* that refers to mature, wisdom and power to enforce obedience (Adnan & Wan Chik, 2008). In Suratul Nahl, Allah says, "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided" (An-Nahl, 125). Based on this premise, Adnan (2011) also propose the Islamic consumer behavior concept that advocates marketers, policy makers and consumer to display positive values such as diligence, thrift, moderation and balance between this world and the Hereafter.

Extraversion and Openness to Experience domain should be viewed differently in the Muslim social setting, especially when women are required to wear *hijab* (head covers), men and women are prohibited from mingling with each other (except for husband/wife or family members), and teachings shouldn't deviate what has been taught 1400 years ago via the Quran and Sunnah. In Suratul Fussilat, Allah says, "And you were not covering yourselves, lest your hearing testify against you or your sight or your skins, but you assumed that Allah does not know much of what you do" (Al-Fussilat, 22). When the big five personality is viewed based on the muslim individual perspective, person is taught to be responsible and abstain from committing sins (conscientious), patient and *tawakkal* which means whole-hearted (emotional stability), *musyawarah* which means consultation (agreeableness), refrain from talking unproductively (opposite of extraversion) and display modesty and upheld conservative values originally taught by the Quran and the prophet Muhammad (opposite of openness to experience).

Allah says in Suratul Baqarah "Yes, whoever earns evil and his sin has encompassed him - those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally" (Al-Baqarah, 81). In another verse He mentions, "Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah , the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous" (Al Baqarah: 177). He also mentions in Suratus Syura, "And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend (As-Syura: 38). These Quranic verses highlight the importance of certain characteristics to be possessed by Muslims so that they will achieve success in their life.

Taking Islamic precepts and teachings at their face value, one would expect to observe, for instance, teamwork, consultative, participative, egalitarian (equality) views among employees in Muslim organizations (Tayeb, 1997). These values especially Conscientiousness and Agreeableness are well positioned to become indispensable parts of the proposed Islamic personality measure construct. This is supported by Saroglou's (2010) findings that the fundamental personality characteristics of the religious person, regardless of culture, are agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Being conscientious is one of the personality traits that are perceptible in Islam. Adherence to the Islamic faith establishes awareness and consciousness to God and owns self in a person while being occupied in the pursuit of physical realities, thus leading to internal harmony that is the source of mental health and emotional stability. This statement is supported by Abdel-Khalek's (2010) recent findings that religiosity is considered as a contributing factor to the quality of life among Muslims.

The need for an Islamic personality measure is clear and justified following scholars' continuous debate on the universality of the personality structure defined in the five-factor model, and also the failure of the Big Five construct to indicate a five-factor structure when tested in the local context (Karim et al., 2009). Development and congruence of the Islamic personality measure factor structure, especially among the Muslim samples may address this issue.

Recently, Othman (2011) proposed the Ummatic Personality Inventory (UPI) which construct is divided into three main components namely *ibadah* (prayers), *amanah* (honesty), and *ilm* (knowledge). However, there are some limitations. Othman's (2011) model is based purely on quantitative method which instruments are fully depended on and validated from the Al-Quran and As-Sunnah. Although it is crucial to ensure that the grounded theory is relying on the Islamic Holy Scripture and the prophet Muhammad s.a.w., views, insights from muslim practitioners and psychologists may enrich the construct with potential behavioral values that are missing in UPI such as displaying Islamic entrepreneurial spirit, controlling emotion through forgiveness and setting up boundaries when applying creativity.

3. Conclusion

This paper is meant to propose the Islamic Personality Model, which serves as an alternative to the existing personality models. This effort is initiated since the existing personality models, in most instances, fail to capture the true attributes of people especially muslims. Based on the extensive review of the literature, a few themes for Islamic Personality Model emerge; namely, *'al-rushd'*, which include diligence, thrift, moderation and balance; '*hijab',* which reflects caring for one's good name, abstaining from committing sins, patient and *tawakkal* that means whole-hearted (emotional stability); *musyawarah,* which means consultation (agreeableness); refraining from talking unproductively and displaying modesty; teamwork, consultative, participative, egalitarian (equality); and spirituality, which include *ibadah* (prayers), *amanah* (honesty), and *ilm* (knowledge). These muslim traits can be initially used as guidelines in further refining the dimensions of Islamic Personality Model.

3.1 Managerial Implication

A lot of benefits can be gained by managers, employees, academics and students by having the Islamic Personality Model. Nowadays, most organizations put heavy reliance on the existing personality models that seem to have a number of flaws especially when they are applied to muslim community. The proposed Islamic Personality Model and its measure can be accurately used to assess the attributes of Muslims, which are perceived to be important when recruiting candidates for new job positions, career advancement, and other human resource related activities.

3.2 Research Implication

The development of the Islamic Personality Model is still at its infancy stage. A lot of effort is required to identify, to refine the traits, and to validate the model so that it can be used by others at the great level of confidence. Qualitative research is required at this stage. It is also recommended for those interested in this field to further develop an instrument to measure the model. to conduct the study, the researchers are advised to carefully design the study, choose the right sampling techniques and use the right data collection process and procedures so that the model and its measure is valid and reliable.

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