

The Element of Accountability in the Method of Managing Employee Motivation in Islamic Institutions

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ABSTRACT: *When examining studies about employee motivation, it was found that employees are the most important asset in an institution. However, motivated employees are a far more important asset. In realizing the importance of motivation in an employee, the management puts its best effort to manage the employee's motivation, including its accountability aspect. Accountability in a management process is divided into two aspects, which is the feeling of fear towards the management and fear towards Allah SWT. Hence, the question arises whether it is appropriate for an employee to fear the management. Another question about fear would be whether it is appropriate to fear Allah SWT or taqwa (fear of God). Based on this scenario, this working paper intended to analyse the method of managing employee motivation in institutions by examining the feeling of fear and taqwa (fear of Allah SWT). Thus, based on the emerging questions, this study had examined its answers by applying the qualitative approach as well as referring to literary sources such as the al-Quran, books and journals. The findings from the analysis showed that the fear that should exist in an employee is taqwa and not solely fear. Taqwa should be one of the tools used to manage employee's motivation in institutions, mainly Islamic institutions. When these emerging questions are answered, it is hoped that this study would contribute cogent knowledge to the management, mainly knowledge related to the importance of taqwa in an employee.*

Keywords -*Motivation management method, accountability, employees' motivation, Islamic motivation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Generally, employees are a valuable asset for an institution. Hence, motivated employees are far more valuable and important. Thus, for this reason, management would adopt various methods to manage and enhance their employee's motivation. One of the methods adopted was to manage and enhance employee's motivation through accountability. Therefore, how is the current trend of managing employee motivation through accountability realised and how Islam views this aspect. Are there differences in accountability in the conventional paradigm compared to accountability in Islam?

As an extension to the scenario discussed above, this study intends to analyse and highlight the method for managing employee's motivation through accountability. Hence, the discussions would begin with the section on the method of motivating employees in an institution through accountability. The discussion moves on to accountability from a conventional perspective and accountability from an Islamic perspective. This working paper ends with the conclusion based on the discussions.

II. THE METHOD OF MANAGING THE MOTIVATION OF EMPLOYEES THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

Motivation in employment is defined as the energy and strength that decides each behaviour and action of an employee [1]. This energy and strength begins from the motive or intention related to needs, wants and objectives of an employee individual [2].

Previous researches and literary works had outlined numerous factors that determine motivation and influence the method that manages the motivation of employees in an institution. Among the factors frequently discussed are external factors such as financial incentives, recognition, teamwork structure, working space and the flexibility of work [3]. Internal factors that could boost the employee's motivation receive less attention although it is an aspect or factor that could be more significant compared to the external factors [4].

One of the important internal factors that motivate and act as a tool for managing the employee's motivation is accountability [5]. Accountability is an internal factor that stirs motivation to the highest level compared to other factors [6]. It is assumed that accountability is the key to employee's motivation [7]. This is not unusual as it is normal for humans to seek accountability because they are always curious to know which party is responsible for the actions [8]. However, accountability is viewed differently according to conventional and Islamic perspectives. The definition of accountability according to both these perspectives shows that indeed there is a difference between the conventional and Islamic versions of accountability [9]. The difference is when accountability from the conventional perspective refers to the management while the Islamic perspective refers to Allah SWT.

In addition, accountability from the context of this study would look into its relations with one of the factors that motivate employees, which is fear. Hence, the analysis mentioned in the next section would analyse the method of managing employee motivation through fear towards the management and fear towards Allah SWT.

III. ACCOUNTABILITY FROM A CONVENTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

According to the above section, management from a conventional perspective presumes that management is accountable for creating fear. From the context of this study, management refers to the employee's superiors, which comprises supervisors, directors, managers and the chief executive officer or CEO. In other words, management is the entity responsible for all tasks or jobs performed by the employees, as stated earlier [8].

In line with the responsibility that is shouldered, it is mandatory for the management to manage the employee's motivation levels. Nevertheless, to manage employee's motivation is not an easy task, what more with the existence of extensive problems related to motivation in the institution. Hence, this does not mean that the management could wantonly choose to settle the employee's motivation problem by instilling fear towards the management. This is because fear towards the management would lead to numerous other problems.

Studies have found that problems that exist due to fear towards the management leads to the fear to be vocal or voice out issues [10] and fear in receiving feedback [11]. Consequently, these problems indirectly have an effect on the employee's work performance and discipline.

Employees are more disciplined to work because they fear the management, especially when management is around them [12]. This shows that when the management is not around the employees, they become less disciplined to work. Hence, it could be said that motivation created through fear towards management would not last long since it fluctuates depending on the presence of the management. A study had discussed this similar issue of fear being a strong motivating factor and found that fear towards the management would not be permanent in nature because if the management were absent then performance and motivation would decline [13].

Besides that, the proscription of having fears towards the management was discussed in Deming's 14 Points for Management. Dr. William Edwards Deming founded Deming's 14 Points for Management. The philosophy of quality and the need to enhance quality by Dr. William Edwards Deming was summarized in the System of Profound Knowledge and in Deming's 14 Points for Management [14]. The topic on fear towards the management is mentioned as the eighth point. A study had focused on Deming's 14 Points for Management and found that when fear towards management is curtailed, an employee exhibits better work performance [15]. This is because by curtailing fear towards management the employee would be comfortable to ask questions, ask for further instructions or report on problems that have occurred.

When looking at the previous discussions, a lot has been mentioned about the problems that exist because of the fear towards management, which indicates that it is inappropriate if employees are motivated by instilling fear towards management. However, in order to ensure that the employee's motivation and discipline is controlled, although without fearing the management, the management itself could replace fear with respect. Employees who respect the management would cause the formation of virtuous values in the workplace and contribute towards the desired achievements and objectives of the institution [16].

IV. ACCOUNTABILITY FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

As discussed earlier, accountability from an Islamic perspective refers to Allah SWT. Thus, based on this study on the fear factor, this section discussed the management of employee motivation in reference to the fear towards Allah SWT. The fear of Allah SWT is referred to as *taqwa*, which is when humans fear Allah SWT and carry out all the commands of Allah SWT while abstaining from all that is forbidden by Allah SWT [17].

Besides that, Islam forbids its subjects from fearing anybody besides Allah SWT and in this case, the other person or body would be the management. The actual feeling of fear or the instinctual feeling of fear is to fear Allah SWT [18]. Moreover, studies had emphasised on the concept whereby fearing Allah SWT is supposed to be what humans should feel and this feeling is different from fearing humans or in the context of this research, the management itself [19, 20]. Earlier discussions mentioned that fearing the management is only temporary, whereas fearing Allah SWT is not [13]. This is because the concept divinity or Allah SWT is characterised by its permanent feature of existence and the employees who fear Allah SWT always have Allah SWT in their hearts.

In addition, Allah SWT exhorted in the al-Qur'an concerning the command to fear Him and forbid the feeling of fear towards other humans through verses handed-down. A study had analysed the verses from the al-Qur'an that were relevant to the management of motivation for employees [21]. The study found 28 verses from the al-Qur'an that referred to the feeling of fear towards Allah SWT, which could be clearly related to the management of motivation for employees. The verses in al-Qur'an referred to were surah *al-Maidah* (5: 3, 23,

28, 44, 94), *al-Taubah* (9: 13), *Hud* (11: 78), *al-Ra'd* (13: 13), *al-Hijr* (15: 69), *al-Nahl* (16: 52), *al-Nuur* (24: 52), *al-Syu'ara* (26: 108, 110, 126, 131, 144, 150, 163, 179), *al-Ahzab* (33: 39), *Faatir* (35: 28), *al-Zumar* (39: 23), *Qaaf* (50: 33), *al-Thur* (52: 26), *al-Hasyr* (59: 16, 21), *al-A'laa* (87: 10), *al-Bayyinah* (98: 8). From the 28 verses from the al-Qur'an, five verses had clearly mentioned that Allah SWT had forbid the feeling of fear towards anyone besides Him, which was found in verses from Surah *al-Maidah* (5: 3), *al-Maidah* (5: 23), *al-Maidah* (5: 44), *al-Taubah* (9: 30) and *al-Nahl* (16: 52).

Therefore, based on the emphasis on the prohibition to fear someone besides Allah SWT, management should take the initiative to guide and motivate employees to follow their human instincts, which is to fear Allah SWT. Thus, when managing employee's motivation, management should propagate virtuous values so that employees become more *taqwa* by sowing fear towards Allah SWT as well as carrying out the commands of Allah SWT while abstaining what Allah SWT has prohibited.

Thus, by fearing Allah SWT, the value of accountability becomes the basis compared to accountability that is temporary and weak such as accountability towards human entities in the form of upper management, top management or mentors. Accountability towards Allah SWT is clearly more rightful and with a basis compared to oneself, for example, accountability towards achieving a target set by oneself. The value of accountability, which has a stronger basis, is needed to ensure that the employee's motivation is at the highest level, on the right track and permanent based on the paradigm and Islamic worldview (*tasawwur*). This is shown in the Fig 1 below.

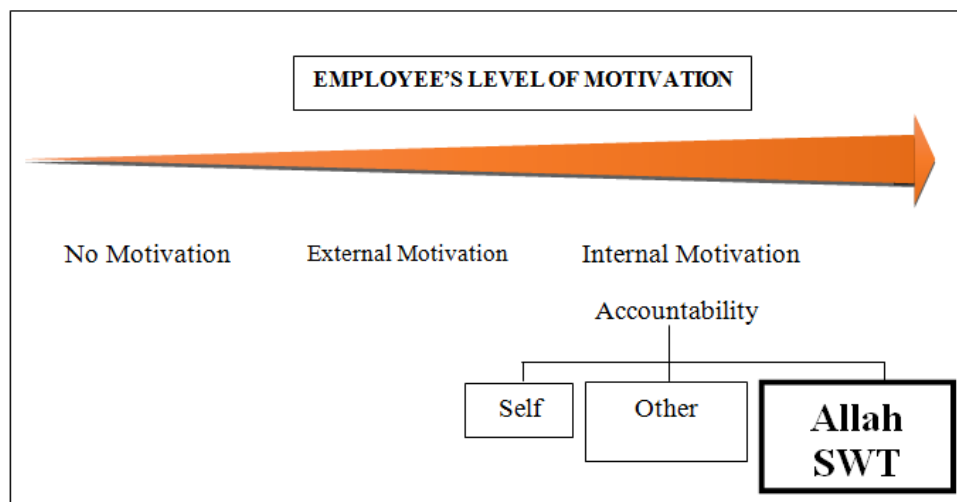


Figure 1: The Continuity of Employee Motivation[22]

V. Conclusion

It could be briefly concluded that the feeling of fear is human instinct. Hence, in the context of managing the motivation level of employees, the management and employees must be aware and informed about appropriate feelings. The management must make known that employees should respect the management and not fear them. Fear towards the management could lead to other problems associated with fear such as hesitant to voice out issues, ask questions, enquire about further instructions, report problems and receive feedback.

Therefore, the management could manage employee's motivation levels by guiding employees to become more *taqwa* by always fearing the Almighty that created all beings, which is Allah SWT. As discussed earlier, in order to become employees who are *taqwa* they have to obey the commands of Allah SWT and abstain from what has been forbidden by Allah SWT. Hence, this would hinder employees from committing acts that are deemed *maksiat* and wasteful because Allah SWT has forbidden these kinds of acts through Surah *al-Mukminun* verse 1 to 3, as stated below [23]:

"Certainly, the faithful have attained salvation; those who are humble in their prayers; who avoid vain talk"
Surah *al-Mukminun* (23: 1-3)

Based on this verse from the al-Qur'an, which is interpreted as "people who are Mukmin, successful and contented are those who are focused and calm during the solat (prayers) as well as those who distance themselves from *maksiat*, either in the form of useless and non-beneficial speech or actions". This shows that employees who are *taqwa* have been successful in distancing themselves from what is forbidden by Allah SWT.

Therefore, looking at the importance of the employee fearing Allah SWT; hence, the employee's management should ensure that the employees are always motivated by possessing feelings of fear towards Allah SWT compared to fearing others such as the management.

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