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## Does perceived organizational support moderate the relationship between Islamic work ethics and Islamic learning organization

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### Abstract

In an extremely competitive environment, Islamic private higher education institutions in the Malaysian peninsular are striving to get enough students just to be able to cover up the expenses apart from making any profit at all. In fact, Islamic Private Higher Education Institutions are among the highly competitive environment of Private Higher Education industry adding to that the Islamic ally modified curriculum that is pushing it towards a small market segment. The study here utilizes the well-known model of Peter Senge the most profound editor and practitioner of the Learning Organization. The model was adapted to fit an Islamic culture and it is to be tested on several IPHEIs in the Malaysian peninsular. The outcome of the model is the adapted concept of the Islamic LO, while the suggested independent variable is the Islamic work ethics. Which is to be tested with the moderating effect of the perceived organizational support.

**Keywords:** Learning organization, Islamic work ethics, perceived organizational support

### 1. Introduction

The Learning Organization is a fairly new concept to the world of organizational behavior. In fact, in his book "The fifth discipline 1991" Peter Senge was the one to popularize the concept and to give it a clear definition and a structure. The learning organization is the organization that continuously learning and expanding its capabilities to create results that are truly desired. Since then the papers on learning organization multiplied and the topic soon captured the interest of many authors like Marsik and Watkins, Ortenblad and many others. Indeed, those before mentioned authors in many of their papers asserted on the significance of the context where the concept of LO is being tested or nurtured. Hence, Aini Ahmad, a prominent scholar from Lancaster University in England have done a PhD research and published few articles on the Islamic perspective of the LO. Furthermore, Yazam Sharif and Ammar Alqolaq in three conference papers have presented the Islamic LO for the first time aiming by that to name things the right name. Thus, this paper aims to illustrate the concept of LO which was adapted to fit the context of those PHEIs in the Malaysian peninsular. However, this is a concept paper that needs to be empirically tested.

### 2. Overview of Learning Organization (LO)

Over time, more than a few definitions of learning organization have been created by researchers. Nevertheless this paper would like to shed the light on only one outstanding definition which have been widely accepted. The concept of learning organization was made popular through Peter Senge's (1990)<sup>[1]</sup> publication called 'The Fifth Discipline'. He defined a learning organization as an organization which encourages continuous learning among its employees. Other researchers such as Garvin, Pedler *et al.* and Watkins and Marsick added other elements such as the existence of learning climate and transformation among the organization's members on a continuous basis that would assist in the practices of a learning organization (Senge, 1990; Garvin 1993, Pedler *et al.* 1991, Watkins & Marsick 1996)<sup>[1, 3, 4, 5]</sup>. These authors trust that regardless of the miscellaneous increase in the learning organization models over time, Senge's model seems to be the most widely accepted by other researchers. As such, the authors of this article will stress on the review of this specific model. Based on Senge, a learning organization shows five key features: systems thinking, personal mastery,

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mental models, a shared vision, and team learning (Senge, 1990) [1].

### 3. Islamic view of Learning Organization

Researchers have observed that the adaptation of learning organization in different contexts has become a well-discussed topic of discussion. However, some researchers have stated that not much has been written on learning organization in a religious context (Sharif, 2014, Ahmad 2013) [2, 6]. Ahmad has attempted to study on how Islam views the concept of learning organization (Ahmad 2010, Ahmad 2011) [7, 8]. Apart from that, Sharif recently studied the determinants of Islamic learning organization and suggested that the learning organization from Islamic perspective should be labelled as 'Islamic Learning Organization' to reflect its growing importance (Sharif, 2014) [2] and that it is slightly different than the earlier learning organization created by Senge and other Western models (Senge, 1990; Garvin 1993, Pedler *et al.* 1991, Watkins & Marsick 1996) [1, 3, 4, 5]. What can be said is that the learning organization in the Islamic perspective or the Islamic learning organization (ILO) is a slowly emerging research area within the learning organization literature. Organizations under ILO are Syariah-compliant, i.e. they follow the Islamic rules and regulations as laid down in the Quran, the holy book in Islam.

### 4. Islamic Learning Organization (ILO)

One of the most outstanding management ideas created in the 20th century is the concept of 'learning organization'. It was created by Peter Senge, an academic from the School of Management in Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA in 1990. He was virtually unknown outside the academic world until he laid down the foundation showing organizations how to use five disciplines to ensure continued growth and prosperity. His starting point is that no firm, however big or successful, is guaranteed to survive for a long time (Senge, 1990) [1]. According to him, the average life of a Fortune 500 company in USA was around 40 years. The central questions that he sets out to answer are: how can companies that have excelled and reached the top collapse suddenly (such as People Express Airlines) and why do other companies survive and prosper? The answer that he found was that the companies that managed to survive over time have succeeded in creating themselves into 'learning organizations' (Senge, 1990) [1]. But Senge's conception of a learning organization (LO) is meant for Western-based organizations or capitalistic organizations. An emerging realization among researchers lately is that not all organizations worldwide are capitalistic organizations. Some organizations in Muslim countries as well as in the West operate on Islamic management principles (Sharif, 2014) [2]. This paper aims to review some literature on learning organizations from the Western literature and also from the Islamic literature and then develops a suitable research framework to study organizations in Muslim context.

If the concept of Islamic learning organization (ILO) can be accepted by researchers, then one aspect of the ILO that needs to be investigated is to determine the ILO outcome so that it be measured. The outcome of ILO can be viewed from the Islamic management principles that it follows. In Islam, the 'Tauhid' (the deep practice) is important (Kazemian & Ghamgosar 2011, Mohiuddin 2012) [9, 10]. 'Tauhid' is about

relations (Mohiuddin 2012) [10]. It is divided into two types: 1) *Hablumminallah* – relationship between mankind and God and 2) *Hablumminannas* – relationships between human beings (Ather & Sobhani 2007) [11]. The focus on the development of people in society and in organizations is given high importance in Islam (Abuznaid 2006) [12]. People are important to society and organizations as they are regarded as leaders on earth (Khalifah), a role designated by God (Razimi *et al.* 2014, Sulaiman *et al.* 2014) [13, 14]. To carry out these duties, human beings must abide by some rules (designated as Islamic management principles) (Weir 2008, Zangouinezhad, A. 2011) [15, 16]. These principles can be divided into five: 1) Consultation (*Syura*) in all decision making; 2) Discipline; 3) Cooperation; 4) Justice in work distribution and 5) Trustees on earth (Ahmad 2006, Branine & Pollard 2010) [17, 18].

### 5. Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) and Islamic Learning Organization (ILO)

The Islamic ethics here refers to the ethical values held by Muslim employees which organizations which are regarded Muslim-based organizations. Essentially, ethical philosophy provides the basis for various contemporary concepts of work beyond conventional business objectives of profit making. Meanwhile ethical behavior is concerned with doing the right thing or acting fairly to others (Ahmad 2006) [17]. The foundation of Islamic ethics was the Muslim understanding and interpretations of the Quran teachings, the practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (known as the *Sunnah*) and the practices of his immediate successors (especially the caliphate *Khulafa Ar Rashideen*) and passed down to all Muslims more than 1,000 years ago, which always bring Muslims to submit Allah (God) (Ahmad 2011, Abuznaid 2006, Ahmad 2006) [8, 12, 17]. The main motive of Islamic work ethics is the notion that every human being is required to practice the goodness and forbid evil in all aspects of life (including in organizational life) (Ahmad 2006) [17]. Thus the employee work ethics (i.e. Islamic work ethics) would influence the learning process of employees in organizations as well as their learning outcome in organizations (Islamic learning organization outcome) (Sharif, 2014) [2].

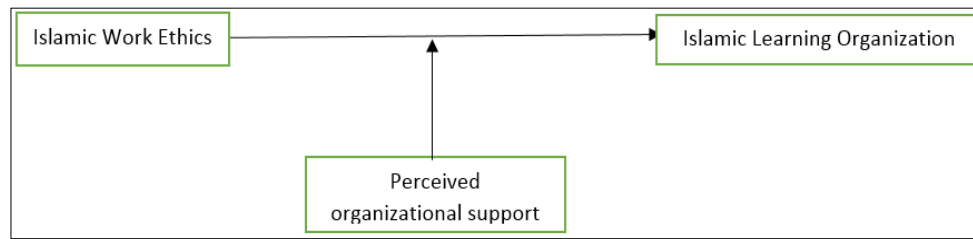
### 6. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) to moderate the gap on Islamic work Ethics and Islamic Learning Organization

The concept of perceived organizational support (POS) was created by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson and Sowa (Eisenberger *et al.* 1986) [19]. It describes the employee's perception about organizational commitment with respect to his or her welfare (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, Suazo & Turnley 2010) [20, 21]. It also refers to employees' belief about the degree to which the organization cares about their well-being and values their contribution. It is also defined as a social exchange relationship which is the resultant from exchanges between the organization and its employees (Eisenberger *et al.* 1986) [19]. Based on the organization support theory, development of perceived organizational support is encouraged by employees' intention to assign the human-like characteristics to organization (Mankanjee & Hartzer 2006) [22]. The employees who perceive a high level of organizational support believe that the organization cares about them and values their cooperation. Frequently researchers have mentioned the importance of potential role

of employees' perception on organizational support (35). Eisenberger *et al.* argued that the different factors such as organizational rewards, which are presented to employees in the form of appreciation, money, encouragement and credit are effective forms of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger *et al.* 1986)<sup>[19]</sup>. All these rewards would imply

that employees are valuable to organizations concerned. Thus, POS has the potential to moderate between the antecedents and consequences in a situation (Mankajee & Hartzler 2006, Allen *et al.* 2003, Shore *et al.* 1991)<sup>[22, 23, 24]</sup>.

## 7. Proposed Framework



## 8. Conclusion and Discussion

This paper aims to illustrate some of what could be used to explain the emerging concept of Islamic Learning Organization. However, perceived organizational support seems to fill in a gap between the independent variable Islamic work ethics and the dependent variable Islamic Learning organization. Although this is just a concept paper and It is very well recommended to be carried out as an empirical study to further test the hypothesized framework.

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